



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 06819767 6



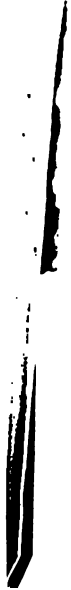


Parr

ZBC

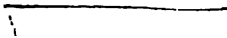


]



Parr

257















Vignette.



HOLME LEE'S *faucet*
Harriet Farr
FAIRY TALES.

A NEW REVISED EDITION.


With 22 Original Page Illustrations.



LONDON:
FREDERICK WARNE & CO.
BEDFORD STREET, COVENT GARDEN.
NEW YORK: SCRIBNER, WELFORD & CO.

1869. w

W.P.



Rep. Bd. No. 7648/09



CONTENTS.



TUFLONGBO'S CHILDHOOD.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. His Birth and Parentage,	1
II. The Elfin Gifts,	8
III. The Salamanders,	12
IV. Tuflongbo's Adventures with the Ondines,	16
V. The Parable of the Split Reed,	22



TUFLONGBO'S YOUTH.

VI. In the Chief City of Sheneland,	28
VII. Tuflongbo and his Companions go in search of Ogres,	35
VIII. Tuflongbo is brought before Rudbeakia,	40
IX. Tuflongbo grows Older and Wiser,	45
X. Tuflongbo puts on his Chameleon Suit,	48
XI. Tuflongbo performs a great State Service,	53
XII. The Coronation of Queen Osmunda,	57

TUFLONGBO'S GREAT JOURNEY.

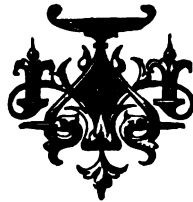
CHAP.	PAGE
XIII. The Farewell Feast,	61
XIV. The Weedy Little Waif of the Crag,	66
XV. Ogre Gulmalog and his Bubble-Blower,	75
XVI. The Awful Fate of Gulmalog's Bubble-Blower,	79
XVII. How Tuflongbo and his faithful Band were dispersed,	83
XVIII. How Larkspur rejoined Tuflongbo,	89
XIX. Clickaclop and his Ogress,	93
XX. Clickaclop comes Home with more Feathers in his Cap,	102
XXI. Desperate Crisis in Clickaclop's Castle,	111
XXII. The Hospitable and Courteous Griffins,	119
XXIII. The Captive Elves,	125
XXIV. The Terrible Results of Flight,	129
XXV. The Combat of the Crumplecues,	134
XXVI. In the Deep Sea-Caves,	147
XXVII. A Blissful Reunion,	149
XXVIII. The Old Cobbler's Message to Tuflongbo,	154
XXIX. Little Idle, and the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with Many Tendrils,	156
XXX. Fairy Queen's Heralds proclaim the Grand Ball at Elfin Court,	163
XXXI. The Grand Ball at Elfin Court, and what happened there,	168
XXXII. The Solemn Festival of Midsummer Eve,	177
XXXIII. There's no Smoke where there's no Fire,	180
XXXIV. The Awful Warning of Pickle, Prig, and Slumph,	196
XXXV. The Reward of Courage and Kindness,	206
XXXVI. The Conspiracy of Spite and the Mask-sellers,	219
XXXVII. Spite's Journey to Elfin Court,	229
XXXVIII. Spite's Interview with Fancy, the Court Moralist and Story-Teller,	235
XXXIX. How the Conspiracy of the Mask-sellers was quite suc- cessful, and how Princess Trill was carried off,	249

CONTENTS.

v

CHAP.	PAGE
XL. Prince Glee and Tuflongbo set out in Pursuit of Princess Trill,	255
XLI. Prince Glee and Tuflongbo fall into the hands of Giants,	259
XLII. Prince Glee and Tuflongbo in the Giants' Well, catch a glimpse of the face of Mannikin Hope,	272
XLIII. How the Giants changed their Minds about making Lark-pie of Princess Trill, Prince Glee, Tuflongbo, and the Blackcap, and what they did with them afterwards,	289
XLIV. The Return of Prince Glee, Princess Trill, Tuflongbo, and the Blackcap, to Elfin Court,	295
XLV. Little Content's Happy Days,	300
XLVI. The Arrival of Fairy Nettle,	303
XLVII. Little Content is scowled away,	305
XLVIII. Little Content's Father discovers his Loss,	308
XLIX. Little Content falls in with Tuflongbo,	313
L. Tuflongbo's Council,	318
LI. Lying Bugloss's False Alarm,	321
LII. The Invasion of Rufnagumba's Territory,	324
LIII. The Four-winged Dragon is captured,	328
LIV. The Disappointment about Supper in the Dragon's Den,	338
LV. The Death of Rufnagumba,	346
LVI. The Magic Crystal,	349
LVII. The Princesses are led astray,	350
LVIII. Despatches sent to Queen Osmunda,	354
LIX. The Pursuit of the lost Princesses,	357
LX. The Giants' Attack,	365
LXI. Into the Country under the Sun,	369
LXII. The Valley of Spectral Temptations,	377
LXIII. The Return of Prince Polyanthus,	383
LXIV. The Invasion of Marshollos,	386
LXV. The Humiliation of Prince Polyanthus,	392
LXVI. The Cavern of Subterranean Cataracts,	394
LXVII. The Valley of a Thousand Rills,	403
LXVIII. The Conquest of the Degenerate Turtles,	408
LXIX. On the Homeward March,	413
LXX. The Halt by Clutch's unsunned Garden,	417

CHAP.	PAGE
LXXI. The Famous Petition in favour of Little Idle, . . .	420
LXXII. " Rise up, Sir Tuflongbo ! "	426
LXXIII. The State Receptions at Elfin Court,	429
LXXIV. The Grand Tournament and Feast,	438
LXXV. The Royal Hunt and Rescue,	450
LXXVI. The Arrest of Sir Tuflongbo,	455
LXXVII. The Trial of Sir Tuflongbo,	467
LXXVIII. Little Content's Return to his Lost Home,	475
LXXIX. The Marriage of Sir Arum and Princess Myrrh,	481
LXXX. Tuflongbo abolishes a Bad Custom,	486
LXXXI. The Story of the Enchanted Dumplings,	489
LXXXII. Sir Tuflongbo lays by his Knapsack and Walking-Stick,	499
LXXXIII. Sir Tuflongbo's Last Story,	503
LXXXIV. Sir Tuflongbo puts off his Shoes,	510





LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.



The Horned Owl of Tanglewood,	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Fairyland,	<i>Vignette</i>
The Young Adventurers in Gulmalog's Dungeon,	84
Snub quickens the Movements of the Ogre Squintaskew,	118
The Sea King and his Court,	147
Tuflongbo visits the Old Cobbler,	154
The Old Woman in the Hollow Tree and her Little Maid Idle,	158
Aunt Spite in the Custody of Pierce, Deep, and Keen,	191
The Great Tuflongbo received at Elfin Court by Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies,	209
Traveller crossing the Sea to the Shores of Alepivi,	212
Prince Glee and Princess Trill meeting the Stranger from the Country,	233
Prince Glee and Tuflongbo captured by the Giants,	268
Battle of the Giants,	291
Tuflongbo finds the Dragon Rufnagumba Slain by Betony,	347
Daffodil receives his Death-wound in attacking the Giants,	367
Tuflongbo and Hawkweed watching the Evolutions of the Ser- pentes,	388
The Fate of Snap Dragon,	399
The Deputation to Tuflongbo on behalf of Little Idle,	420
Sir Arum defeats Grimgolphin,	442
Prince Polyanthus rescues Queen Osmunda,	453
Little Content recognises some Old Acquaintances,	479
Lappit and Lob pursuing the Enchanted Dumplings,	491





1. The image shows a dark background with a checkerboard pattern in the upper right corner. The pattern consists of alternating black and white squares. Below the pattern, the image is mostly dark and blurry, suggesting a surface or a transition between different materials.

2. The image shows a dark background with a checkerboard pattern in the upper right corner. The pattern consists of alternating black and white squares. Below the pattern, the image is mostly dark and blurry, suggesting a surface or a transition between different materials.

3.

4.



HOLME LEE'S FAIRY TALES.

TUFLONGBO'S CHILDHOOD.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

IN setting forth to the world the lives of those eminent persons who have left a mark on their generation, it is usual first to descant upon their origin, or, where that is shrouded in obscurity, to speculate on such particulars as ingenious suggestion or careful research may have amassed. It is not my intention to depart from this rule in narrating the history of Tuflongbo. Character is a growth, not a spontaneous creation of the will; and as precision is the beauty of biography, it will be my earnest endeavour to trace the flower of those qualities which made him great and famous to their germs in his honoured progenitors and his own early education. I am not unaware that many conflicting accounts of his birth have obtained various degrees of credence in different quarters; and here, perhaps, it may be as well to

A

mention—and at once to repudiate—the chief amongst those legends with which interested writers have sought to embarrass the true course of history concerning Tuf-longbo's descent

With an obscure romance which might well occasion surprise on brightened days, a certain author relates that he is the son of one Pippin, an obscure jester who was found in the core of an apple, and for several years was confined to the exercise of his own ignoble trade from which he was only rescued by the desperate father.

Another romancer, with astounding audacity of circumstantial evidence, has dared to assert that he was shot forth from the clouds, bound to an arrow, and being picked up and adopted by an old Cobbler—a crooked little man, with a big head, and buckles to his breeches—narrowly escaped an apprenticeship to the Last.

A third mythologist, with a flippancy ill-befitting the narrator of so important an event, *suggests* that the great traveller was *probably* found by the Elf Transformation in her Bag of Disguises; and from this flimsy shadow of a pretext, he goes on to evolve a long train of incidents that never happened, save in his own active imagination.

A fourth writer, with monstrous incredulity, laughs to scorn every tradition that has yet been published on the subject, and with an unparalleled perversity, that has found its reward in utter neglect, professes to believe that Tuflongbo never had any real existence at all, but that he was *invented* by Fancy, the famous Court Moralist and Story-teller.

But enough of these idle and contradictory fables! They are only such as mystify the origin of all those



TUFLONGBO'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE. 3

whose celebrity has excited the envy and vain emulation of their inferiors ; while the tradition which I am now about to relate may be relied on as strictly authentic—being drawn up as it is from valuable family correspondence, and the lips of the famous traveller himself.

Tuflongbo was the only child of Mulberry, a distinguished member of the Royal Society of Wiseacres, and a scholar whose prodigious learning had raised him to the dignity of best authority on all disputed points of ancient and modern fable. Though no courtier or place-hunter, his profound reputation had earned him the honour of being selected to impart the alphabetical elements of useful knowledge to the young Prince Goldheart, son of the reigning Queen of Sheneland ; and it was during one of his official visits to his royal pupil that his beloved wife, the bright and fanciful Lupine, while wandering in the heat of the afternoon under the pleasant shadow of the garden trees, found their wee, drowsy dot of a baby fast asleep on the curled and crinkled leaf of a parsley-bush. A serviceable little fairy-nurse sat over against him, fanning the rays from his face and singing a lullaby, while a perfumed zephyr hovered round the spray and rocked the quaint cradle in time to the tune.

Lupine leant over the unconscious child in loving wonder and awe ; then she softly touched his dimpled cheek with her forefinger to try if he were *real*, and drew it away, smiling and more amazed than ever when he opened a pair of great surprised blue eyes that laughed as if they knew her. "Take him ; he is not glass—he won't break," said the fairy-nurse ; "he belongs to you and Mulberry." And she was just laying the tiny darling into Lupine's tender arms, when the professor came swiftly along the green walk, and peep-

ing through his clever spectacles over his wife's shoulder, exclaimed, "Oh, what a marvellous event! That is Tuflongbo, my blessed Lupine—the son who is to be the crown and joy of our old age, as Oracle foretold when we were married! How proud and happy we shall be!! I must go to the bells a-ringing!!!" And away he fussed with a solemn delight, while Lupine sat down with her new treasure in her lap, and the Elfin chimcs tuned up from far and near in fantasia.

Quamoclit, though nobody, had heard a whisper of something in the air, and meeting the flurried and gleeful Mulberry near his own door, she soon learnt what had happened, and before Tuflongbo was an hour old, she and the bells together had spread the news of his auspicious arrival throughout the length and breadth of Sheneland. The friends and neighbours then came with their congratulations in such numbers that the professor's house and garden were like a fair; and with beautiful resignation Tuflongbo allowed himself to be handed round to the guests, who all, as it were, took a sip of him, until the fairy-nurse was obliged to interpose and restore him to his mother, lest he should be quite kissed away.

The same evening, Mulberry called a select council of his brother Wiseacres, to consult with him over the future destiny of his son; and being assembled together under a cool arbour of vine-leaves, with a fungus table to hold their tobacco-box, they lit their pipes, and, as the fragrant smoke curled up in clouds above their learned heads, they discoursed in scientific language on the propitious signs which had attended the discovery of the remarkable child.

"The sun was shining when he was born ; therefore will he be of a cheerful, open, genial temperament," said one.

"It is summer, therefore will he be abundantly blessed of the flowers and fruits of fortune," said another.

"The time was afternoon ; therefore will he live to grow old," added a third ; but the sagacious and bulky Gourd—whose words carried as much weight in Shene-land as the prophecies of Oracle herself—held his peace, and puffed at his long pipe in thoughtful silence.

Mulberry anxiously waited for him to speak ; but when he found that his venerable friend still continued mute and meditative, after the rest of the council had given their opinions, he gravely inquired if he had been struck by any omen of evil that was likely to traverse the otherwise propitious lot of the child. Gourd replied that he had not, but with characteristic caution, before he would hazard any prediction as to Tuflongbo's future good or ill luck, he required that he should be produced before him for his conscientious personal study ; and the babe was accordingly summoned from his mother's bower : and being placed amongst the soft contents of the tobacco-box, for fear of accidents to his delicate limbs, the philosophers drew round the table, and proceeded to smoke their pipes over him while they took him into serious consideration.

Each Wiseacre was anxious to test the child's qualifications, with regard to his own peculiar hobby.

"Behold his length of foot,—the flatness of his great toe !" cried one. "My word for it, Mulberry, your son will be a famous traveller !"

"Remark the prominence and brilliance of his blue

eyes!" exclaimed another; "he will assuredly be a ready, a shrewd, and just observer!"

"Note the length and straightness of his upper lip!" said a third. "He will be an orator, a humourist, and a wit!"

The sententious Gourd, who would not let everybody else have his say first, and then, with a certain gravity, he pronounced his judgment to

"Your son is a fine fellow, a well-bred, worthy Mulberry," were his elegant observations; "and you he inherits wisdom, from his mother. He has courage also, and a large measure of audacity; he will be enterprising, inquisitive, and self-reliant. Success must look on him with favour, because he will always woo her generously, frankly, and bravely. He will live to be famous, and to make his name of Tuflongbo known and revered from one end of Sheneland to the other!"

While the respectable Gourd spoke, the council was held in admiring silence, but as the last syllable rolled sonorously from his lips, a cheer broke forth that rang through the garden, and penetrated to Lupine's bower, where she was anxiously waiting with the fairy-nurse, until her darling should be restored to her. At this ominous sound of merriment, they simultaneously remarked that they hoped the philosophers were not giving the baby anything that would not be good for him; and their fears being awakened, they crept stealthily out to the place of meeting, and, peeping into the arbour between the vine-leaves, they saw Tuflongbo still in the tobacco-box, and the Wiseacres smoking and talking over him as they would have done over any other natural curiosity.

The intelligent little fellow sat up staring at them

TUFLONGBO'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE. 7

alternately with wonderful discrimination and delight, until Blackcap Sycamore, who never lost an opportunity of trying an experiment, took advantage of the candour of the child's open mouth, and rashly popped his pipe into it; an impertinence which Tuflongbo resented with a series of piercing cries that went to his mother's heart. When the trial was accomplished, the philosopher coolly restored the pipe to his own lips, observing with much pathos and regret—"Your son will never be a smoker, Mulberry; and that's a pity—a mighty pity! for tobacco is the only pleasure in life that never disappoints us!"

On hearing this abominable sentiment—which not a Wiseacre amongst them all contradicted—the fairy-nurse rushed into the midst of the solemn conclave, snatched the child indignantly from his comfortless lodging, and carried him back, still shouting most lustily, to the arms of the tender Lupine, who ran straight away with him to her dainty bower.

"There is nothing amiss with his lungs," then said Poplar, with serene composure; "and that is a satisfactory reflection for you, Mulberry."

Mulberry replied that the same thought had just occurred to himself; and the grand object of their deliberate consultation being removed, the philosophers filled their pipes again and began to talk of other things.

CHAPTER II.

THE ELFIN GIFTS.

THE following morning, Lupine, attended by the fairy-nurse, carried the child forth into the garden, and laying him down in his beautiful cradle, sat by it to watch and wait until the Elfin Things brought him their homage of gifts and graces, as the custom in Sheneland is. The sweet Zephyr, who had rocked him asleep the day before, then again floated over the spray where he nestled, causing it to undulate gently with the air of her gossamer wings, until the dreamy motion lulled him into a smiling slumber.

Then from their secret lurking-places in herb and flower, crept all manner of creatures, quaint and curious, and clomb up by stem and twig to admire Tuflongbo as he lay cozily purring on his curled and crinkled leaf. The fairy-nurse kept a shrewd eye upon them, lest any malign or hurtful thing should approach the innocent child to molest him; so that when Wasp came with a swift, exultant "whiz-z-z," to feed on the bloomy ripe peach of his sun-flushed cheek, she dashed him off with her palm-leaf fan; and when Gnat flew circling round and about, with his stealthy "whir-r-r," and his sting ready, she bade Zephyr leave the cradle for an instant and chase him away. But in that instant Tuflongbo awoke, and not all the rocking or lullabying in Sheneland could prevail on him to go to sleep again, when he saw the odd and comical creatures that were gathering to pay him their compliments; and very pretty it was to

observe how he chirruped them a welcome, and laughed his merry thanks for the numerous gifts with which they enriched him.

First came Snail, with all his worldly goods upon his back, and after making him an oration on the wisdom of being contented in his condition, whatever it might prove, endowed him with his own fortune of little Pelf, less Care, and passed slowly by to make way for Spider, who reeled him off a silken thread to Hold-fast and Spintrue. Then came the bonny brown Bee, and gave him some of her Blitheness; and the Ant, who brought him a service of her Forethought and Industry; next followed the Beetle, who gave him a strain of his Courage; and the Locust, who offered him Speed and Strength on the Wing; and the Lizard, who furnished him with needful Craft; and many more besides, until Tuflongbo was gifted with all the every-day virtues that are in use in Sheneland.

When the Elfin Things had gone their way home again, which they did with much solemnity as soon as their mission was performed, the elemental spirits of Fire, Air, Earth, and Water appeared, surrounded by their marvellous powers and terrors; but though Lupine hid her face, and the fairy-nurse cowered under his cradle-bush, Tuflongbo looked up to the sky, where a vast black cloud was gathering, with more wonder than awe. When it was at its darkest, suddenly it was rent asunder with an awful crash, and out of the dazzling splendour of its inner vault Lightning launched a flight of cloven spears, while Storm and Tempest raced down the Wind with a thousand hoarse voices of Echoes in pursuit. Then came swift legions of Showers that rattled, and railed, and pelted on rock, and sand, and mellow garden-

ground, until all the trees, and shrubs, and herbs, and flowers that grew shed forth their uttermost perfumes; and the Gnomes that dwelt deep in the solitary caverns of the Earth issued thence with heaped-up baskets of gems and metals, and cast them abroad upon the soil.

Only a bit of iron fell within Tuflongbo's reach, but that he instantly seized in his tiny grasp and held it fast, though some invisible creature struggled with him for it passionately; and when the wild, elemental spirits had retired, and left all calm again, it was still safe, clutched in his sturdy little fist. Then Lupine lifted up her face, and looked at it, hoping to find some glittering jewel or precious metal, but when she saw nothing but a dull fragment of iron-ore, she was disappointed, and murmured sorrowfully, "Not even gold or silver! He has drawn an iron lot, my darling, and must toil and trouble like his father before him."

"'Tis a good lot enough," said the wise fairy-nurse, to console her. "This is sterling metal, and if it be rough and homely he will have your fancy to gild it, and all his Elfin gifts besides. He seems highly delighted with it himself. Watch how he smiles as he bites it."

Lupine sighed, but she watched and smiled too, until dreading lest he might do himself a mischief, she tried to withdraw it from his mouth, when, to her exceeding satisfaction, she discovered that he had cut all his teeth, double as well as single, and his wise teeth too, upon its hard surface. Then his hair began to grow, and grew and curled over his round little head in a beautiful crop of chestnut curls. Next he stretched his queer short legs, which lengthened visibly under his mother's eyes, and yawned, and rolled over, and rolled himself out of his cradle upon the ground, when he immediately

found the use of his feet, and to the wild dismay of the frantic Lupine, of the fairy-nurse, and of Zephyr, away he ran; in and out amongst the bushes, over, under, and through the flowers, up and down, and round about, with all three of them after him, as fast as they could fly on wings of fear!

But they could not catch him. So swift was he, that he seemed to be in twenty places at once, and when Lupine thought she had him by the tail of his pretty coat, or the fairy-nurse got her fingers amongst his ruddy locks, in a twinkling he had escaped again, and was laughing at them from the topmost twig of a tree, or peeping, like the quaintest of little owls, out of some green ivy-bush far beyond their reach.

The chase was at its maddest, when home came Mulberry, and with him the bulky Gourd, the brave Poplar, and the inquisitive Sycamore, who immediately tucked up their dignity out of the way, and joined in it with the heartiest good-will, but also with much panting, and puffing, and shortness of breath. The sight of the famous Wisacres in pursuit only appeared to urge Tufiongbo to more crazy pranks than ever, and it was not until Zephyr contrived to puff a cloud of clematis-powder in his face, which bewildered him, that he was laid hold of by the fairy-nurse, who tickled him into a fit of laughter by way of punishment, and then carried him, kicking and struggling, to his mother's bower, Lupine following in a distracted state, while the Black-caps gave him three cheers for his famous spirit, in which his father's voice was the loudest and most exultant of all.

CHAPTER III.

THE SALAMANDERS.

THIS wonderful adventurous tur
 matter of course
 and the little mo
 he could *speak*,
 butter, after his
 Lupine decided
 regular instruction in the various duties and denials of
 life—a decision which a council of Wiseacres confirmed
 with universal approbation.

For seven fairy years his mother taught him by
 means of beautiful parables, taking for her text the
 flowers, the fruits, and the leaves, with which he was
 familiar, or the quaint Elfin Things that had endowed
 him with so many excellent gifts; and throughout this
 period he was also steadily, yet imperceptibly, acquir-
 ing the practical lesson of pure and prompt obedience;
 and how firmly it was impressed on his ingenuous mind,
 let this incident of his temptation by the Salamanders
 testify.

Tufsongbo was sitting by the hearth one winter's
 night as good as alone; for Mulberry had fallen asleep
 in his chair, and Lupine, though she appeared to be in
 her usual place, was really gone abroad on a flight with
 Fancy into Dreamland, while the fairy-nurse was out
 on a gossip amongst her numerous friends and acquaint-
 ance. There was a fine fire of pine-knots frolicking up

the chimney, and as Tuflongbo watched, he saw it wreath, and twist, and curve, and coil itself into a thousand exquisite shapes which changed every moment, but all bent towards him and whispered in soft stealthy voices, "Come play with us, Tuflongbo, come play with us! See how merry we are, what sport we make!"

But Tuflongbo answered, with a shake of his wise little head, "Nay, I am forbidden to play with Fire!" and immediately the fantastic demons glided, some hissing, some laughing, into the deep red caverns amongst the pine-knots, and there lay, plotting mischief.

Presently, out from a smouldering chink flew Spark and lit on Tuflongbo's coat; but he clapt his hand upon it, and crushed it to death, exclaiming, "You are only a small foe, Spark, but you are dangerous."

Enraged at this courage in the child, Flash then darted vehemently forth from a ruin of ashes, and endeavoured to strike him, but the wary little mannikin pushed his stool back and laughed in its face, as it retreated even more swiftly than it had sprung out of its lair. After this for a short time all was very hushed within. Tuflongbo heard the wind blowing in the garden, and now and then a shower swept against the window; but the sound was dreamy and soothing, and perhaps he might have fallen asleep within reach of his enemies, had they not been too eager to press on their temptations to leave him the chance.

For now a great log rolled apart from the rest, and out of the burning hollow rose Blaze and Flame, and towered up the wide chimney, and mopped and mowed and danced and roared, and threw terrific shadows on the walls to frighten him; but Tuflongbo saw their

weird, grotesque contortions quite undismayed. Baffled here again, the graceful serpentine reelings and windings began their maze once more, and, as if they were the least harmful of spirits, gently wooed Tuflongbo with dulcet songs and the same whisperings as before. "Come play with us," they said, "play with us! We are Salamanders, and will warm thee many a cold day and frosty night. Show us thy gratitude, Tuflongbo, that thou wilt not refuse our revels? If Blaze and Flame daunt thee, we will be merry Twinkle and sly Glimmer, and give thee a little—so prythee, come play with us, come play with us."

"No, that must not be," said both Tuflongbo, sturdily, and drew farther away from his tempters. "You are beautiful and kindly amongst yourselves, but I am not akin to you and could not mingle without dreadful hurt in any of your sports."

"Thou dost not know us, Tuflongbo—we are the most beneficent of spirits!" cried Blaze in feigned astonishment.

"Yes, I know you—you are good servants and bad masters, and woe betide him who gives you the upper hand!" replied the child.

"Ah, ha! thou art a coward, Tuflongbo, thou art a coward, and *dare* not play with us," sneered Flame, with disappointed rage.

"Nay, I am no coward, though I am too prudent to burn my fingers wittingly," retorted Tuflongbo.

The Salamanders and Salamandrines at this laughed good-humouredly, and fell to their pranks amongst themselves; and very quaint and fantastical these pranks were to behold. Tuflongbo watched them with a drowsy delight. Whenever a pine-knot dropt away,

out flew myriads of Sparks, white and yellow, and red and violet, and chased each other in a mad gallop up the chimney; Blast driving wildly after them with a loud halloo! Then tiny, sportive Flashes leapt to and fro the logs, and glided like lizards down their crinkled bark, and peeled it off and ate into their hearts, until their bulk fell suddenly down in gray ashes on the hearthstone, where Glimmer and Flicker hid themselves in the ruins to keep warm.

This had happened twice or thrice, and still Mulberry had slept on, and Lupine did not return from her Fancy-flight, or the fairy-nurse from her gossip, until, at last, the disappointed Salamanders had no more strength for their gambols, and were fain to supplicate Tuflongbo to give them fuel. But he distrusted them, whether in their awful might or their treacherous meekness, and refused; on which a spiteful little Twinkle peeped out at him and said, "If thou dost not, we will leave thee altogether, and then thou wilt be in the dark, ah, ha! ah, ha!!"

"Just as you please," replied Tuflongbo firmly. "My mother bade me never meddle with Fire for good or ill, and I must obey."

And there he sat, patiently waiting while the last Spark flew away; then Blaze, Flame, and Flash died; Glimmer and Twinkle survived them a short time, but at length they also sank exhausted, and a black log crushed them out. Only Flicker was now left, being driven to its final refuge amongst the embers. It looked up pitifully at Tuflongbo, and Tuflongbo looked down pitifully at it, but he could give it no help without breaking a promise to his mother; and shivering as much with sorrow as with cold, he watched the pleasant face

grow fainter and fainter, until it vanished and was gone!

Just at that moment Mulberry awoke, and feeling shivery too, cried, "Oh! my blessed Lupine, we have dreamed the fire out!"

Then Lupine es, and descended from her Fancy-flight, nurse coming back from her gossip, brou and tinder-box, and tried to rekindle it. sulked and refused to catch alight, and il after a good deal of coaxing from a lected it, that it condescended to burn ed a volley or two of smoke in their fa. appeared, and then the

antic Salamanders showed themselves again, as lively, frolicsome, and mischievous as before.

The vivid Sparks rushed up the yawning chimney with many a twirl and caper; Flash laughed, Flicker winked, Twinkle danced, Flame roared, Blaze rioted, and Blast hallooed, until the merry Fire had warmed them all through and through, and little Tuflongbo, when he went to bed, was as nice, as crisp, and as hot as a toast!

CHAPTER IV.

TUFLONGBO'S ADVENTURES WITH THE ONDINES.

ABOUT six fairy months after his triumph over the Salamanders, Tuflongbo had another adventure to prove the metal of his obedience, which happened in this wise.

Being left in the garden alone one sunny afternoon

he climbed up by the wall, and looked out on the unknown world beyond with eager, wistful eyes of curiosity. On one side he saw the gray shadow-like spires, and arches, and towers of the chief city of Sheneland, with streets and houses clustered together, and continuous streams of people passing to and fro, and in and out, at the gates. But that busy scene did not much attract him. He knew that his father moved amongst it all day, and at night he saw him come home, often so weary and dispirited, that even his beloved Lupine, with her happy fancies, could scarcely brighten his pale and care-worn face. On the other side, however, he beheld a lovely vision of delights ; rich sloping meadows of emerald green, enamelled with exquisite flowers, spread away to the purple horizon, like waves of undulating turf ; and through their midst flowed a river, that was *here* dark, still, and deep, *there* broken into foamy eddies and miniature cascades by the masses of rock that encumbered its bed.

In some spots its banks were open and sunny ; elsewhere they were clothed with shady woods and avenues of trees that drooped over the water, sweeping their lower branches on its silvery, rippled surface. The whole prospect was indescribably sweet and pleasant ; thousands of cool-breathed zephyrs fanned the sultry air about the river, while all day long Tuflongbo had languidly hunted the garden through, searching for the very tiniest sprite of all the gossamer tribe in vain. He longed to be out amongst those strange and fair fields, and by the beguiling river, but never yet had he left the serene shelter of his father's house and garden, and he did not venture to do so now until he had asked leave of his mother.

He therefore descended from his look-out, and ran to her in the house, where she was busy mending the learned Mulberry's best black gown, and having told her his ardent desire, begged her to suffer him to go abroad into the beautiful *lupine* gazed in his impatient face very some moments, and then said, "Thou art *lupine* day by day, my little son!"

"I shall never *lupine* than thy heart, mother," replied he, and le against her bosom, and kissed her.

"Go," said she, with a voice of infinite tenderness. "Go! but promise me that thou wilt not venture into the river that flows amongst the fields. Thou art not yet strong enough to swim against the current, or even to steer thee a safe, straight course with the stream. Though it appear ever so laughing, or ever so tranquil, I bid thee beware of it!"

Tuffongbo promised, and with his mother's wise words of love and warning in his ears, sped away into the world beyond his home; rejoicing, yet half afraid, like a bird that for the first time plumes its wings in the infinite blue plains of heaven. He made direct for the river, that appeared, as he drew nearer, to roll under the sunshine like torrents of molten silver, and standing on the bank, watched the fickle Shadows reflected in it with admiring wonder. At first, it flowed with solemn, even course, but at length millions of tiny waves crisped and curled on its surface, and Ripples innumerable laughed and danced down the tide, sparkling under his eyes, until he was quite dazzled and bewildered.

Then Foam, snowy white, swam on a swift eddy up to the bank, and lapt his dusty feet in her cool freshness,

while Spray caught a handful of glistening drops, and dashed them like dew in his heated face. Hardly had he recovered from the delight of these pleasantries, than all at once he became aware of a queer little brown weed of a creature crouched on the top of a crag that just showed itself above the water. A cloak of ragged leaves was wrapt about his body, from below which dangled two stalky legs, finished off with knots of roots instead of feet. His head was shaped like a lily-cup reversed, the extended outermost petals acting as ears, and the centre one over his forehead terminating in a tiny horn. His features were indistinct, but his eyes were as brilliant as diamond-cut crystals, and twinkled with merry mockery while he sat making comical signs of civility to Tuflongbo from his slippery perch. He did not speak, or even open his mouth—indeed it was not clear that he had any mouth to open—but he was evidently anxious that Tuflongbo should join him on the crag, for he extended a hand to help him again and again, and a sly, pretty Ripple whispered that he would find it one of the pleasantest, airiest seats in Sheneland at that time of day, if he would only try it. But Tuf-longbo courteously declined the proffered hospitality, and walked away towards a group of trees, where the earliest shadows of evening were beginning to gather in robes of maize, and azure, and dun-tinted mist.

One of the most graceful and transparent of these lovely Shadows was brooding over the water intently, the long arm of a weeping beech being extended above her. Tuflongbo observed her from the distance, and, as he approached, his curiosity was excited to know on what her gaze was so earnestly bent. Drawing quite near, he still kept his feet from trespassing on the

borders of her sad-coloured garments that swept the grass; and peering down below the beech-tree, where the river ran with a dark stillness, he saw the shape of two mysterious hands stretched up towards the light. As the veil of yon and on, these hands seemed to clasp; themselves; to wave desolate farewells; to and rise and sink again, in vain, tremulous and as his eyes became accustomed to the om, he perceived further the outline of a . Just at the same instant, his weedy stance of the crag came floating down-stream astride of a straw, and, catching at the reflection of a twig in the water, to stay his impetuous course, looked in Tuflongbo's face with an air of the most deplorable pathos, mutely entreating him to vouchsafe his help to the lost shadow struggling to escape from the river.

The kind little Fairykin's first impulse was to spring at once to the succour of the drowning mystery, but as he leant down towards it, it receded insidiously, and he saw that it was impossible to reach it unless he stepped from the bank altogether, and trusted to such insecure footing as the mossy rocks and stones of the current might afford; and this, by reason of his promise to his mother, he must not do. His distress was extreme; other aid than his was there none. The mournful Waif beat the air with its poor limbs, and its whole frame was twisted and contorted with agony when Tuflongbo intimated his helplessness by a sorrowful gesture of the head. The wretched thing then flung itself towards him and drifted to the bank on the lower side of the tree, as in a frenzy of despair, while the weird hands of the imprisoned shadow wrung themselves wildly to-

gether, and then burst asunder as if casting away their final hope of deliverance.

Tuflongbo's eyes were half-blinded with tears, and he could hear the beat of his own heart in the stillness as he stepped round by the smooth bole of the beech-tree, to try if his help might avail from thence. But no sooner had he done this than a sarcastic peal of laughter broke forth from the mocking Waif, who, gathering himself carefully together, backed out into the mid-current, looking so droll, whimsical, and mischievous, that Tuf-longbo did not know in the least what to think of his vagaries; and turning bewildered to seek the drowning shadow, he saw only the curved and knotted roots of the beech-tree that extended themselves below the water with some faint fantastic resemblance to hands! Then was he glad that he had not yielded to the temptation of a pity which would have led him into the delusion and snare that had been so artfully contrived to test his obedience; and singing gaily to himself, he ran along by the bank, while the Waif, astride of its straw, and with its shattered cloak wrapped close, kept even pace with him on the river.

Evening was now drawing on, and twilight stole out of the woods with her thousands of thousands of gray-habited Shadows in her train, those in raiment of azure and rose, violet and gold, having disappeared one by one before the steady sweep of the sombre legions that precede the night. Tuflongbo felt no dread of them, but he nevertheless presently turned towards home, and when he had gone about half-way, he met his father coming out to meet him across the fields. The wise Mulberry first embraced his little son, and then encouraged him to tell him all he had seen and done

since leaving his mother ; and when the child narrated how the weed of a Waif had mocked him, when he discovered the dangerous falsehood of the Shadow in the river, the Wiseacre said—

“Now can I trust thee wholly, my little Tuflongbo, since thou hast kept a hard promise, and wit to look at thou art an enterpriser before undertaking it ; for, the leading-strings of mothers are soon laid by, and stands or falls, walks or wavers, according to the strength that is in him. Thy wings are broken out, and to-morrow thou shalt go forth with thy own city.”

CHAPTER V.

THE PARABLE OF THE SPLIT REED.

WHEN they reached home Lupine received the child with eager pleasure, and heard his adventures with enthusiasm ; but when Mulberry told her of his intention to carry their son with him into the city in the morning, her heart was filled with a keen distress and anxiety. “He is so small and weak,” pleaded she ; but Tuflongbo craned himself up on his tiny tip-toes, and exhibited himself as if quite a formidable size for his age,—which was eight fairy-years precisely.

The fairy-nurse wagged her head, intimating her approval ; and declared that he would be a famous manikin by and by ; and then she brought out a suit of proper little clothes, of a remarkably tight fit, but with plenty of pockets, and said that he must lay aside his childish

coats on the morrow, and don these instead. Tuflongbo examined them with rosy delight, gauged the capacity of the pockets, and felt almost lifted off his feet with the idea of the sudden greatness that was coming upon him, when his father dropped a bright golden coin into the deepest, and said—"There, my son, is something for luck! As long as thou hast that coin in thy pocket thou wilt never want for money." And it is stated by friends and foes alike, that having retained that golden handsel all his life, the celebrated traveller was never without ready cash and credit in any country whither his adventurous spirit led him.

Tuflongbo did not sleep much that night for thinking of what was to happen on the morrow, and at the earliest peep of day he was wide awake, and up, and busy investing himself in his new clothes, that he might be prepared to set out as soon as his father called him. But Lupine was at his door first, and smiling and standing a little way off, she watched her son pranking himself with all the daintiness and vanity of a fledgling fairy; until he spied her and ran into her arms, where he forgot his unaccustomed finery in a moment, and allowed himself to be kissed and crumpled just as if he had on his childish coats again.

"I have somewhat to tell thee, Tuflongbo," said she; and leaning against her heart, and with his eyes on her ever-bright and tender face, he listened while she told him this parable of the Split Reed:—

"On the marshy southern border of a mountain lake there once grew a tall Reed which lifted its head high above any other Rush of the Swamp. When the strong winds blew, it bowed and bent, and when they were

still, it raised its crest again with as much majesty as before. Broad leaves, glossy and green, and sharp as swords, sprang from its root to the height of its shoulder, and then drooped downwards and outwards as in homage to their king. The meaner inhabitants of the morass held aloof. The Reed that towered above them by its height, and enviously consulted amongst themselves, might reduce him to their own level.

“So long as he bowed to the winds, and claims to himself no privilege greater than those of the tallest Reed in the swampland, said a shrewd Rushling to his emulous companions, but if by reason of his proud position he should become headstrong and wilful, *then* will follow humiliation, ruin, and a fall.’

“The Reed was, perhaps, aware of the feelings of his neighbours towards him, and being complaisant and kindly disposed, he endeavoured to moderate the haughty airs that had given them offence ; but he could not lessen his stature, and though he bowed deeper than ever before the Winds, and showed that he felt himself no stronger or better than they, when the aerial spirits asserted a superior dominion, they refused to be propitiated ; and declared that his pride increased day by day, and every hour his crown sat on his brow more arrogantly.

“The Reed, having a due self-respect, now perceived that the time was come to turn a deaf ear to the invidious remarks of his inferiors, and retiring within himself, held his own with calm dignity and easy grace. This serene behaviour could not fail to be exceedingly provoking to all those who would gladly have seen him abased ; but a slimy snake-like little Rush, with guile

and wickedness in his thoughts, crept to his feet, and kissing the ground before him, whispered humbly,—

“‘ Noble and generous Reed, deign to look on thy servant, and tell him why *thou*, who hast no peer, and art taller by the crown than any Rush in the morass, yet bendest thy lofty head to the imperious Winds, and renderest homage to the rude inclement Blasts!’

“‘ He who made us all, made them sovereign and me subject. I do but bow before my masters,’ answered the Reed.

“ At this the slimy Rush laughed with a slavish deference and said,—

“‘ Nay, my good lord, but thou hast too much humility! Wilt thou be a servant of servants, who art King of all the Lake?’

“ The Reed stirred uneasily on his throne of leaves, and turned his head about, and gazed abroad with a new sense of power awakening within him. The Rush went on :—

“‘ Survey thy realms, gracious Reed—look on all the multitudes that owe thee allegiance, and thou wilt feel that one so great was never made to bend, and bow, and dip before a Wind blown out of a Cloud!’

“‘ There is a Universal Law—each is under another,’ replied the Reed, moved, yet hesitating.

“‘ True,’ said the slimy Rush; ‘ but let each learn his place, and take it, keep it, and maintain it against usurpers for his own honour and the common weal. Why should the noble crouch and the abject reign?’

“ And then he slunk away, and from the depths of a black oozy bog watched the effects of his flattering and deceitful words.

“ The Reed began at once to lay them to heart, and

to consider of his dignity and his meekness ; and to argue within himself against the law that made him who dominated the Marsh render fealty to the vagrant Winds. Then resentful and dissatisfied feelings swelled in him mightily, and raising his proud crest higher than it had ever stood he made a vow to himself to lower it no more to any Wind or Blast that blew. The slimy Rush saw this and understood it, and chuckling inwardly, tried to be ready in the disasters he foresaw.

“And that night a Tempest that revelled wildly over the Linn Marshes, but the Reed, secure in his own sovereignty set his neck firmly, and refused his due homage to the Winds ! And they rent his crown from him, and cast it into the water ; and broke his stately stalk from nape to heel, and dashed his brow into the mire, and made him lower than the meanest Rushling of the Swamp.

“And when morning dawned, there lay he,—bruised, crushed, and fallen ; and as he strove to rise with a sad and shadowy dignity amongst the ruined leaves of his throne, there rang through the air a chorus of voices that taunted him with his humiliation ; and the slimy flatterer, who had enticed him to his destruction, advanced and mocked at him with antic gestures of allegiance, and cried,—

“‘Thou art but a Split Reed ! Come down from thy throne and lie in the dust ; thou art a King no more, but only a Split Reed and a Ruler without Discretion !’ And the Reed fell along the earth and perished.”

When the fanciful Lupine had made an end of her Parable, she embraced her little son, and looked intently

into his eyes, to see if he had understood her. It was her usual practice to leave him to puzzle out the moral of her lessons for himself, and sometimes the inner light did not shine out until long after the pretty story had been told. On this occasion, however, she was earnest that he should take her meaning at once. Tuflongbo perceived this, and after a few minutes of thoughtful silence, during which he watched her countenance with awe and wonder at its inexpressible tenderness, he said,—

“Mother, I will try always to wear thy counsels uppermost.”

“They are counsels of love, my little son,” replied she, folding him again in her arms. “Thou art leaving me, for strange trials and scenes unknown. I can be no longer a shield and protection to thee, save by my words that thou mayst remember in hour of need. Be loyal; stand firmly by thy own self-respect; lend no ear to the opinions of base and envious persons; and turn away from the enticements of flattering tempters. There is a voice in every one of our hearts will always tell us as much good of ourselves as ’tis wholesome to hear. Now, kiss me, my son, and go—there is thy father’s voice calling to thee from without.”

And Tuflongbo clasped his little hands about her neck, kissed her, and went his way.



TUFL YOUTH.

VI.

IN THE CHIEF CITY OF SHENELAND.

MULBERRY took his little son by the hand, and led him straight away towards the eastern gate of the city, which stood, white as an arch of foam, in a beautiful serene light and calmness. All the buildings hereabouts were large and noble, the streets were wide, the atmosphere was balmy and exhilarating. The green of gardens and groves appeared amongst the walls, and the music of innumerable birds, and falling waters of fountains, filled the air with a perpetual hum and harmony. Tuflongbo gazed around with wonder, admiration, and delight : and as long as he lived, never did he forget his first impression on entering the chief city of Sheneland.

The sense of strangeness and beauty almost bewildered him for a time ; but, at length, he recovered his clear discernment, and then he found himself in the midst of other Fairykins like himself, all whose faces were set the same way as his own. Some had guides with them, and these appeared happy and well-cared for as they trudged

steadily along ; but others were alone, or banded in groups together, and amongst these Tuflongbo, new to the busy scene, saw most to observe.

There was one by himself, whose name was Larkspur, a merryandrew of a fellow, who, instead of walking orderly through the streets, turned head over heels, and performed all manner of antics, to attract the notice of the staid portion of the community—and it must be admitted that the staid portion of the community, though protesting against him, with a thousand sober airs, watched him, nevertheless, with furtive smiles of amusement.

Tuflongbo, who by nature gloried in anything queer and comical, more than once hung back from his father's hand to see what would be the end of his wild freaks, and he laughed with shrill shouts of glee when Larkspur, after climbing up a waterspout, flung himself boldly into the air, and, revolving like a wheel as he descended, plumped into the centre of a fountain, and achieving an elegant summerset amongst the falling showers of spray, bowed right and left to his acquaintance with his hand on his heart. They applauded him—they could not help it—and even Mulberry said he might be Harlequin to the Court!

The next who drew Tuflongbo's speculative eyes upon him was Chickweed, a little droll, who had a tangled clue of a puppy half smothered under his arm, a bird's nest in one pocket, and a top, marbles, string, toffy, and slate-pencils in the other. Besides a great rent at one of his knees, he had plasters of mud of divers colours ornamenting his clothes everywhere ; and as he was going bareheaded, it seemed that he must have lost his cap. He had truant written on him from top to toe;

and as he marched along whistling for lack of care, Tuf-longbo's heart warmed to him, until, in a sudden expansion of feeling, he declared that he should like to go to school, if Chickweed went too ; but Mulberry eyed the heedless wight with rather more severity, and remarked that he feared C going anywhere but to school, if he mig appearances ; and presently they saw hi with Larkspur, when the pair ran off in ite direction to that in which the disting, e was conducting his son.

When they we it, Tuf-longbo felt quite sorry, but soon h. e engaged by a cheerful little creature a y himself, whose name was Canary, and who was perseveringly conning his lessons as he walked along. Mulberry spoke to him with great kindness, and bade his son be friends with him ; and thus introduced, the two Fairykins first took a long stare at each other, and then began to exchange personal confidences.

While they were talking, there came by, in a terrible fuss, the white-headed Chamomile, whose face was bitter with anxiety, but still full of energy ; and when Canary halloed to him to stop and tell them what was the matter, he replied that he had not time, for he was in a hobble again. He always was in a hobble, that luckless Chamomile, and hot water seemed to be his most natural element.

Proceeding straight on their way, they overtook Darnel, sauntering along with his hands in his pockets, lazy, lounging, ugly, and dirty. He made a grimace at Canary, and another at Tuf-longbo ; and when they were a few paces in advance, he flung a stone, which narrowly missed striking Mulberry on the head.

"Here, Tuf, hold my books!" cried Canary, firing up in an instant; and as the vicious Darnel took to his heels, the cheerful little fellow gave chase, and though the other dodged and doubled, and turned and twisted, and ran like the coward and sneak he was, Canary persevered, and never gave in until he caught him and had administered such a proper allowance of cuffs as he had earned. He then rejoined Tuflongbo and his wise father, who in his absence had recommended him to his son as the best everyday companion he could have; saying that Canary was always pleasant and active, whether in work or in play, and so bold and persevering besides, that he was never tired or discouraged until he had accomplished whatever he began; and Tuflongbo was ready to admire him with all his might, for Darnel whom he had beaten was as big again as himself.

It now became clear that they were approaching that famous place of public instruction through which all the youth of Sheneland must pass before they are allowed to engage in any Elfin work or enterprise; for the scholars were greatly multiplied and the idle tykes had altogether disappeared. And at last they came in sight of it, standing on the shady side of the street, with three doors wide open, and a flight of steps up to each.

Tuflongbo's heart beat very fast, for his father said he must now leave him; and after a few words of tender advice and of warning, he gave him a final embrace and disappeared. Canary then pointed to his new friend to go in at the lowest door, and sped away himself to the highest; and so the son of Mulberry and Lupine was left alone in the midst of a throng of strangers, who all eyed him with curiosity, and passed on to their own places in the class. He hesitated for some time whether

to follow them or to run off and play, but at length duty overcame inclination ; he found courage to mount the steps ; and immediately he entered the building, he was met face to face by the mild Professor Parsley, who took him in hand forthwith, and led him at a brisk pace through the first lessons of his practical knowledge.

Until this exertion, he had not a moment for general observation ; but soon as he was set free, he began to gaze about him, and presently recognised the venerable and just Professor Parsley, the head of the college, sitting on his rostrum in the highest school. The experimental Sycamore and the bulky Gourd, his father's friends, were also there ; and besides these, he saw another master, Hop by name, who appeared to be the dread of all his scholars, good and bad alike. At first, Tuflongbo could not understand the reason of his being so detested, for his countenance was sleek, and his manners of the finest glaze ; but at length he perceived that he was *unjust*, and, therefore, whatever was most generous, honourable, and kindly in his scholars, revolted against him imperiously. Again and again were his decrees carried up to Rudbeakia and reversed, but at the next opportunity his conduct was as cruel and unpopular as before.

Tuflongbo trembled for the time when he should be promoted from the easy instructions of Professor Parsley, and placed under the rod of the remorseless and one-eyed Hop ; and having been previously well trained at home, this was not long deferred, but actually took place on the very first day of his arrival at the famous school. Hop received him with a politely sarcastic bow, bade him turn his toes out, and as he obeyed the command rather too literally, he got a smart stroke

across his fingers, which made them tingle; but they tingled with pain by no means so much as his heart tingled with indignation against the smirking tyrant who administered the blow.

“Never mind,” whispered a sharp little fellow, Mustard by name, who was illustrating the sum on his slate with hideous caricatures of the detested Hop. “Never mind, we soon get used to it here;” and Tuflongbo, to his sorrow, found the information only too correct; but he braced himself up and endured injustice with patient contempt, remembering how his wise father had warned him to expect many a rub and many a fall ere he could pass through the schools and become his own master.

Amongst Tuflongbo’s contemporaries in Hop’s class were several of those subsequently famous characters who engaged with him in his travels and adventures. Conspicuous on the upper form were Borage and Box, ploughing away at their lessons with the soberest diligence; as also was Mezereon, already distinguished by his courtly manners, and Sardony, by his cutting powers of speech. Tuflongbo’s place was on the lower form, and his next neighbour was Larch, an audacious pickle, who played tricks under Hop’s very nose; beyond him were Lychnis and Wild Sorrel, who could not refrain from jesting at their very intimate acquaintance, the awful rod itself, and a poor creature, one Betony, who with his mouth open, and his eyes wide in chronic amazement, appeared to be the unjust master’s prime favourite.

When the hour came to call over the names and dismiss the scholars at noon, Tuflongbo heard those of Bugloss, Dandelion, Fig, Juniper, Chamomile, Gooseberry, Chickweed, and Larkspur, who all answered to

the roll distinctly—even Chickweed and Larkspur; and on looking round, surprised at their presence, he saw them breathless at the entrance; Chickweed hiding the puppy behind Gooseberry, and Larkspur, with one foot inside the doorway and one out, waiting impatiently until his turn arrived. He then shouted "Tip-tap-toe" like Stentor, and they performed three perfect summersets down the steps, which drew much admiration from the astonished eyes and ears of the assembled company.

Chickweed followed by Gooseberry, who went leisurely, and Tuflongbo, after searching for the puppy, and his faithful friend Canary several minutes in vain, and Tuflongbo, who, from the natural impulse of his heart, and went around the house, and Tuflongbo, a mischievous, restless, and headstrong, and the light-headed, light-heeled Larkspur, who accepted his company with every expression of welcome, and at once discovered in him a kindred spirit. They had not been together long before they were joined by Gooseberry in the liveliest state of expectancy; and this state of expectancy being highly contagious in Sheneland, they all caught it; and feeling sure that something wonderful must be on the point of happening, they determined to treat themselves to a holiday, that they might not risk missing it by being out of the way when it came to pass.

Chickweed then set to work to beguile the interval by teaching the puppy a new trick, and Larkspur practised a difficult rotatory movement that he had lately invented. Thus they two were amused, and Gooseberry was sufficiently occupied in watching for whatever might turn up: but Tuflongbo, meanwhile, had to stand unemployed and idle. This kind of entertainment was far from satisfying his active mind, and after reflecting on his position for some time with ever-

growing discontent, he said boldly, "I see no fun in *waiting* for adventures; why should we not go in *search* of them? Did you never hear of Ogres? Let us go down into Tanglewood and find an Ogre!"

This startling proposal was received at the first blush with mute amazement, but as soon as the three Fairykins recovered their wits and took it in, they burst forth into loud, ringing shouts of applause such as gave Tuf-longbo a delicious foretaste of many a future triumph, and made his heart glow with honest pride.

"We must elect a leader," then said he. Upon which his companions with united voice proclaimed, "*Tuf-long-bo is our leader!*" Thus at once recognising in him—a new comer amongst them—that talent for command which afterwards made him the chief pioneer of discovery, and the most successful traveller in Sheneland

CHAPTER VII.

TUFLONGBO AND HIS COMPANIONS GO IN SEARCH OF OGRES.

TUFLONGBO assumed his dignity as leader with a suitable air of responsibility, and disposing his little volunteers in single file, set off towards Tanglewood at a brisk trot. Chickweed, who was familiar with every turn and twist of the way, acted as guide; and except when he was drawn aside from his duty by some web or nest dangling amongst the bushes, he fulfilled his office well.

There was no region in Sheneland haunted by so many marvellous legends and traditions as Tanglewood,

and it was a masterstroke of policy in Tuflongbo to select it as his first hunting-ground for adventures. The road thither lay through the eastern gate of the city, by which he had entered with the wise Mulberry in the morning ; and after keeping a direct course as far as the Enchanted Bowe ptly southward, and, by
 a mossy green d to a maze of bushes and
 tracks, trees and st which the shrewdest
 wight, not gifted , would have lost himself
 immediately on ver the charmed border.
 But Tuflongbo a ions crossed it fearlessly,
 and plunged into without a moment's hesi-
 tation.

It could hardly fail but that the little band should soon find itself scattered, and in anticipation of this event Tuflongbo selected and trimmed four whistles from a bed of reeds, and giving one to each of his companions, and retaining one for himself, he issued his orders that they should diligently seek, in every possible and impossible place, the Ogre they had come out to find, and that he who was first successful should announce his discovery to the others by blowing three blasts through his whistle. Commands so easy and precise as these elicited every promise of obedience, and the momentous business of the pursuit began with great demonstration and energy.

Tuflongbo set off swiftly down an alley of brambles, his little feet thrilling with the delights of liberty through every nerve. But when he had gained the limits of the path, and found a dense barrier of thorns stopping the way, he paused, and said to himself, meditatively, being alone, "I wonder what an Ogre is like?" And each of his dispersed followers was at exactly the same moment

asking himself exactly the same question—"I wonder what an Ogre is like?"

They nevertheless persevered in the hunt, sure that they should recognise the monster as soon as he was found. But they contrived to combine amusement with duty, each according to his particular taste or inclination; that is to say, Gooseberry filled his pockets with nuts, and having engaged an obliging squirrel to crack them for him, seated himself quietly in a nice safe place, and with unwinking, watchful eyes, waited in exemplary patience until an Ogre should be pleased to walk by his retreat. Larkspur availed himself of the difficulties of the situation to practise his gymnastics, and forsaking the ground, climbed up into a lofty tree, and thence swinging himself from branch to branch, contrived to test the elastic bearing powers of a large district of Tanglewood. Chickweed prosecuted his investigations below, devoting his attention principally to hollow trunks, in which Ogres, as well as other things, might be supposed to live; but he only found some of the singular nests and hives of creatures that delight to build in decaying wood.

Tuflongbo alone maintained a single eye and a single mind towards the object of the adventure. His thoughts were full of Ogres, and of nothing but Ogres. Not one nut did he crack, not one caper did he cut, not one nest did he take; and at last he was rewarded by hearing a most fierce and terrible cry that appeared to issue from the centre of a gigantic old oak, grown half over with ivy. He had a great struggle with his legs here not to run away, but his valour got the better in the debate; and let it be recorded to his immemorial honour, that he stood his ground and never gave way an inch—no, not

even when the invisible thing shouted out with a lengthened halloo, "Tuwhit tuwhoo, tuwhit tuwhoo-o."

Tuflongbo raised his whistle to his lips, and immediately blew the concerted signal, to summon his companions. Larkspur arrived first, dropping down from a branch of the old oak itself; then appeared Gooseberry, throwing away his last shell empty; but Chickweed did not present himself, and dreadful fears for his safety began to trouble the mind of the leader of the adventure. He might have fallen in with another Ogre—who could say? Or he might have lost his whistle, and be unable to find it again. But all these anxious suggestions were put to flight by an instant and present peril which followed in the wake of another loud halloo, and threatened to overpower the endurance not only of Gooseberry and Larkspur, but almost of Tuflongbo himself.

In a densely dark hollow of the old oak, which was draped above and below and on either side with massive festoons of ivy, there suddenly appeared an enormous round horned head, with two big glassy eyes and a beak; and forth from that beak came one after another, in rapid succession, a perfect storm of shrieks—"Tuwhoo tuwhit; tuwhit tuwhoo-oo-oo-o-o!"

"We won't run away!" said Tuflongbo; "no, we *won't* run away!" But what temptations his brave little legs went through while he was bracing himself up to that splendid resolution, let those who have never gone in search of Ogres try to imagine.

Larkspur would have been glad to depart out of Tanglewood by means of his most rapid evolutions, and the expectations of Gooseberry were more than appeased by the spectacle in the ivy bush; but neither could prevail on himself to abandon the gallant leader

to whose originality of character they were indebted for the adventure; and screening themselves partially behind his small figure, they awaited the issue, and longed for their still absent companion.

After a short interval to recruit his breath, the horned creature in the tree again broke out into his hideous melody. The young adventurers quaked from top to toe, and hardly would their courage have sustained them through this prolonged trial had not Tuflongbo said that he had heard how music soothes the most savage beast, and desired his comrades to sit down and play a tune. So the three little Fairykins sat meekly down in a row, and played a tune on their whistles—all in quavers; not another note from beginning to end. And while they played, the thing with the glassy eyes, the horns, and the beak was still and silent.

When they concluded, however, he broke forth into another halloo, which might be interpreted either into applause, consternation, or anger at an incapable mimicry of his own song. And while they were discussing these three various views of it, Chickweed came sauntering up to them, his pockets stuffed out with all sorts of spoils of mosses and lichens, and eggs and nests, that he had discovered in his researches through the woods.

Of course his friends received him with exultant acclaim.

“We have found an Ogre! We have found an Ogre!” cried they as with one tongue, for a moment forgetting terror in triumph.

“Where is he?” asked Chickweed, looking round inquiringly.

“Up in the ivy-bush,” replied they all, pointing at the horns, and glassy eyes, and beak.

"*That an Ogre!*—it is nothing but an *Owl!*" laughed Chickweed, good-humouredly. And then he absolutely shouted, "Tuwhit tuwhoo, tuwhoo tuwhit!" so exactly like it that he might very well have passed for an owl himself.

Tuflongbo was much disappointed, and his countenance fell. But speedily recovering his spirits he tossed up his cap, crying, "Better luck next time." And then he gave the word to march back to school again. And back to school again they marched accordingly, arriving just in the very nick of time to answer to their names when Hop called over the roll; and not having discovered their previous absence, he gave them a good mark apiece as diligent scholars.

But Rudbeakia had been more wide awake, and from him they received a special warning of what would happen if they ever again treated themselves to a holiday; and as Tuflongbo was a scholar new to the rules, he was brought before the just head of the college in person, that he might be examined, and have the inevitable penalties of playing truant at once impressed upon his mind; which scene must now be described at length in another chapter, as its importance demands.

CHAPTER VIII.

TUFLONGBO IS BROUGHT BEFORE RUDBEAKIA.

RUDBEAKIA wore the cap of justice when Tuflongbo was introduced into his presence by Bur, the monitor of the first class; but anxious not to dismay the inexperienced

little culprit on his first appearance before him, he laid it aside, and displayed only his immense organs of benevolence, veneration, and firmness, which never created any alarm save in the consciences of Darnel, Buglos, and a few others of that set, who were incorrigibly cruel, false, and foolish. It was, however, a very solemn occasion, and Tuflongbo experienced a deep feeling of awe as he found himself standing alone before the lofty rostrum, with the eyes of Rudbeakia gazing straight down upon him. A pause of profound and awful silence ensued, which was at last broken by the deep voice of the Professor, who asked Tuflongbo where he had spent the afternoon instead of appearing in school, as he ought to have done. Tuflongbo replied that he had been to Tanglewood.

"What to do there, Tuflongbo?" inquired Rudbeakia.

"I went to seek an Ogre," answered the Fairykin.

"And did you find one?"

"No." Another pause of profound silence here intervened, during which Tuflongbo, who had until now kept his eyes upon the ground, ventured to raise them to the countenance of Rudbeakia, and had such a levity been probable, he would have thought that just and majestic Wisacre was *laughing*. But, of course, he was not; for the next moment he spoke again, and with some severity.

"You found no Ogre, Tuflongbo—where did you look for one?"

"I looked everywhere—amongst the nettles, and brambles, and thorns, and reeds, and rushes, and bushes, and trees, and stumps, and sticks, and stones—everywhere!"

"What do you believe an Ogre to be like?"

"Like an owl, with two horns, and two glassy eyes, and a beak, and a voice that halloos, "Tuwhit tuwhoo, tuwhit tuwhoo-o-o!"

Such unusual sounds issuing from the room of the Head Master caused several inquisitive persons to peep in; and amongst them was Professor Parsley, whom Rudbeakia beckoned to advance for a private consultation on the young culprit's affairs.

"Concerning this little son of Mulberry's, Parsley, how did he pass your examination?" inquired the great Don. Professor Parsley commended him as having passed it very creditably, and as being not at all deficient in useful knowledge—his years considered.

"He appears to be of an imaginative and adventurous disposition," said Rudbeakia. "He has been to Tanglewood to seek an Ogre. Who are his friends?"

Professor Parsley replied that they were Canary, Larkspur, Chickweed, and Gooseberry. On hearing this the Head Master dropt into a brown study, from which he only recovered to dismiss Tuflongbo with these memorable words,—

"Tuflongbo, you have answered my questions without prevarication or excuse, in a brave and honourable manner, which has won my confidence and respect. You have evidently no turn for becoming a bookworm, since you make companions of Chickweed and Larkspur. It will, therefore, be essential for you to enjoy your liberty more frequently than others, and I shall now furnish you with a ticket-of-leave for the fine days, when you may prosecute your curious researches for Ogres in Tanglewood and elsewhere. On *fine days*, remember. When it rains you must answer to your

name in school, or I shall be reluctantly compelled to introduce you to the severe Professor Discipline, who presides over the morals and manners of this noble institution."

Having thus spoken, Rudbeakia bowed his head, put on the cap of justice, and intimated to Tuflongbo that he might withdraw ; first handing him a ticket-of-leave, signed with his name and sealed with his seal. And exulting in the delightful holiday privileges it conferred, the little Fairykin scampered out into the streets in pursuit of his chosen companions.

He sought them up and down for ever so long in vain ; but, at last, he hit on Chickweed, who was arranging his Tanglewood spoils in a quiet nook by himself. He was deeply absorbed in his occupation, and did not observe Tuflongbo's approach until his shadow fell across the retreat he had found, when he looked up, not too well pleased at the interruption, and asked what he wanted.

"I want to show you this !" replied the intruder, exhibiting his ticket-of-leave for fine days. "I have been before Rudbeakia, who has found out that I have no turn for becoming a bookworm, and so I am to enjoy my liberty, except when it rains. I wish you would beg him to give you yours, and then we could make such grand expeditions together, couldn't we ?"

"He would have given me mine ages ago, but my folks want me to be made into a Wiseacre, and I never shall—shall I, Snub ?" said Chickweed, appealing despondently to the shaggy puppy, which pressed its cold black nose to his cheek by way of answer and comfort. "I begin to hate the sight of a Black Cap, and as I cannot have a ticket-of-leave, I have made up my mind

to play truant whenever I am inclined, or have a chance!"

And then Chickweed went on picking over his mosses and lichens, and laying the various birds' eggs in little divisions of a box lined with wool, in a rather grieved and anxious way, as if he were far from being at ease in his mind, even while indulging his vagrant tastes. And no more he was; for his conscience was tender. But his enjoyment on the whole exceeded his pains and penalties, and so he went on his way, which was by no means the way that conducts to the Society of Wiseacres.

Tuflongbo felt an acute sympathy for him, and began to ask if Rudbeakia could not prevail on his folks to take a more just estimate of his genius and qualifications; but Chickweed shook his head.

"It is of no use," said he. "They wish me to be an honour to the family; and my old guardian is so unreasonable that if he took it into his head that I ought to be tall, he would hang me up by the heels and tie weights round my neck to stretch me longer! And that would hardly be more silly than what he is trying to do with my mind: he has topsy-turvied it into the dullest confusion—why Betony himself can beat me in school! I can't express to you, Tuflongbo, the shocking pain inside the very sight of an isosceles triangle gives me, or the anguish of fidgets I find in decimals and fractions. I am not so bad at maps or history, or even at poetry, if there is anything good in it; but I wish the monster who invented sums and problems had drowned himself off Asses' Bridge before ever he entered Sheneland! What I want to be is a naturalist—and they won't let me! That kind old Parsley is constantly telling me that I

could learn all about these treasures of mine"—pointing to his mosses, lichens, and eggs—"in hundreds of books; but, as I say, what is the good of going to *hundreds* of books when I can find all I want to know in *one*—and that the best?"

Tuflongbo concurred with him entirely, and looked on with much interest until the persecuted little truant had finished his pleasant labours, when it was full time to go to bed. And so, with a sober good-night, they parted, and went their separate ways.

CHAPTER IX.

TUFLONGBO GROWS OLDER AND WISER.

ON the morrow Tuflongbo went to school again, and continued to learn his lessons by book and by observation under the guidance of the unjust Hop for several fairy-years. He saw the stupid Betony commended, and the zealous Box reprovèd, and Larch escaping well-merited punishment many a time. He saw Chickweed with a variety of triangles piercing his vitals, and the irritation of decimals and fractions oozing out of his swift toes when he ran off and played truant in Tanglewood. He saw Chamomile tumble neck and crop into a new difficulty every day, and he saw the courtly Mezereon bow himself out of all his scrapes with an elegant ease and a grace that was miraculous. He saw Sardony, Lychnis, and Wild Sorrel trip themselves up on their own smart tongues continually, and he saw Larkspur achieve a brilliant reputation by means of his

light heels and light head, while plodding, studious scholars remained in obscurity.

When Tuflongbo worked, he worked with a will ; when he played, he played with the liveliest energy and delight, growing every hour bigger, better, wiser, and more popular amongst his school-fellows. On fine days he took his ticket-of-leave and went out into the woods to seek for Ogres, being sometimes accompanied by Chickweed, but quite as frequently venturing thither alone. It is not recorded, however, that his investigations were at this early period crowned with success, and the probability is that they were not ; for, a considerable time later, when he had been advanced to the upper school and placed under the instructions of Rudbeakia, we still find him pursuing the same arduous researches with unabated zeal ; and as a proof how deeply the importance of Ogres was engraven on his mind, I may instance the numerous original designs of them which embellish his copy-books, still kept in a high state of preservation amongst those invaluable documents which enrich the chief Museum of Shene-land.

When the conversation of himself and his friends took a flight towards the future, and each said what he should like to be and to do, Tuflongbo's expression of his intentions was invariably the same—betraying that steadfastness of purpose, and that tenacity of grasp on his ideas, which were the main elements of his success afterwards.

“As soon as I have passed through the schools, I shall become an Adventurer,” he would say. “I shall kiss my father and mother, and, with a knapsack on my back and a staff in my hand, I shall set forth in quest

of Ogres, and never shall I rest or return until I find one. They are not in Tanglewood, for I have sought it through and through ; but somewhere they must exist, else should we not hear so much of them in our traditions. I shall make their discovery the sole object of my labours and travels, until it is accomplished ; and for my companions in the journey, I shall choose Canary, because he is persevering and cheerful ; Chamomile, because he is energetic in adversity ; Larkspur, because he is light ; Larch, because he is audacious ; Gooseberry, because he is always on the watch ; Mustard, because he never minds ; and Chickweed, if his folks will let him go, because his knowledge of the queer things in woods and fields would be of immense service to the Expedition."

At this Chickweed would caress Snub, and shake his head despondingly ; but all the other little Fairykins, delighted at being enrolled in the troop of such a leader as Tuflongbo was destined to be, received his orations with wild applause, and placed themselves under his orders for drill every holiday, until they had learnt to march in slow time, in quick time, and in double-quick time, and to practise all the other manœuvres requisite for keeping a band of adventurers in motion.

Tuflongbo once reviewed them before the whole school, and was commended by the just Rudbeakia for having brought them to so high a pitch of discipline ; and those Wiseacres who had smoked their pipes over him and prophesied his future greatness on the day of his birth, began to point out to Mulberry and Lupine how their predictions were coming true already ; and Tuflongbo's excellent parents rejoiced, and said he was indeed the crown and joy of their united lives !

CHAPTER X.

TUFLONGBO PUTS ON HIS CHAMELEON SUIT.

AT last came the day when Tuflongbo was formally pronounced at the schools. He passed with honour, carrying prizes, and immediately ran home to present them before his tender mother and his fairy-nurse. The gloom of his dignity was fresh upon him. They met him with ecstatic kisses, laughing and weeping, but when the ardour of their welcome was over, they retired a few paces off, and contemplated him with eyes of woeful, melting reproach.

"What have I done?" asked Tuflongbo, greatly dismayed.

"Look at your pretty new suit!" cried the fairy-nurse; and obeying her directions, he saw a long rent down the side of one leg, and a crack across the other knee, besides relics of brambles and thorns sticking out of little splits everywhere. "'Tis a pity you cannot see yourself behind, too!" added she, and spun him round, back front, to the grieved Lupine, who, perceiving that he was covered with mud and dust, knew that he must have had many a tumble, and perhaps many a hurt, since he left her, which instantly turned all her feelings into the current of sympathy.

He declared, however, that he was not hurt. So the exemplary fairy-nurse brought a hard brush, and tried to brush him clean, to his very great discomfort; after which ordeal he was put to the question as to how he came to be in such a desperate pickle from merely

going to school. He explained, in a straightforward manner, how, on his first introduction there, he had treated himself to a holiday with three choice companions, and had gone to Tanglewood to seek an Ogre, when, probably, the worst rents in his pretty home-made suit took place. At this confession, Lupine looked grave; but on hearing that the just Rudbeakia had afterwards given him a ticket-of-leave for five days, she was satisfied, and smiled again;—at first she had begun to fear that her son had proved himself to have no more discretion than the Split Reed.

Just at this moment, in came Mulberry, and embraced Tuflongbo on his promotion to independence after passing through the Schools. He did not notice his tattered clothing, but the fairy-nurse felt it her duty to call his attention to it, and to ask what he thought of such rags.

“Clothes are of no importance; he must enjoy the free use of his limbs. He has outgrown these now; and, besides, I saw they were already too tight when he put them on ten years ago,” was the Wiseacre’s indulgent reply.

“Too tight! when his mother and I made them ourselves!” cried the fairy-nurse, with much indignation.

“Yes; it was their only fault,” said Mulberry, with grave decision. “But they have worn very well, therefore be not disquieted; I will provide him with a new suit myself to-morrow.”

“And they had better be made of leather,” returned the fairy-nurse, and intrenched herself in silent reserve for the rest of the evening.

The next day the wise Mulberry took his son by the hand again, and led him into the straight street that runs through the midst of the Chief City of Sheneland,

crossing it in a direct line from east to west. This street contained many gay stalls of goods for sale, and Tuf-longbo's eyes were especially attracted by the wares which two traders, named Specious and Plausible, displayed in showy lines along the front of their dwelling. These wares were masks, modelled to represent all the virtues, excellences, and graces that embellish the Fairy character, and were, in many instances, very tolerable likenesses of what they mocked, save that they had a uniformly disagreeable expression of being overdone.

Tuflongbo was, however, scarcely shrewd or experienced enough to detect this at the first glance, and thought some of the faces so pretty that he wished to stop and look at them. The sagacious Mulberry made no remark, but permitted him to do so, and Tuflongbo was satisfied after a very short survey, saying, of his own accord, that the masks were none of them so nice as his mother or his fairy-nurse, though they seemed very pleasant and smiling a little way off. Then Mulberry told him he had come to a just conclusion; any wares manufactured by Specious and Plausible were sure to be trash, and as they could only be bought and paid for with false coin, no honest or true people ever engaged in dealings with them;—and yet, from the number of persons hanging about their stall, they seemed to drive a pretty considerable trade too.

Passing forward to some distance beyond the mask-sellers, they presently paused again before the open window of a Cobbler—a crooked little old man, with a big head, and buckles to his breeches—who was hard at work at his last, making a pair of square-toed, double-soled shoes, with nails in the heels. He looked up as the shadow of Tuflongbo fell across his board, and nodded

good-humouredly, saying, "I have been expecting you, Tuflongbo ; I know what you want—a new suit and new shoes, and your shoes are nearly ready. Come in."

So Tuflongbo went in ; and as soon as the last nail was set in the heels of the square-toed, double-soled shoes, he was bidden to put them on, which he did with a proud satisfaction.

"They are strong, they are comfortable, and they look as if they would last," said he, complacently.

"They will last until you have no more need of shoes," said the Cobbler ; and then he made the Fairykin stand erect, that he might take the measure of his height, his breadth, and his girth, for his new suit : and this he did, talking to himself thus musingly all the time.

"He is but a tiny Fairykin, this son of Mulberry's, yet he is destined to be a famous traveller, and to go through marvellous adventures ; therefore, we will make him a suit for use, rather than for beauty ; of sound stuff, and sewn with best wax thread. This of home-make is very good as far as it goes, and the pockets are highly commendable, but it could never stand the wear and tear his clothes must be prepared to go through. He is not handsome, but his figure is light, active, and clean-limbed,—shaped for great enterprise and endurance."

Tuflongbo listened to the Cobbler's murmured reflections with profound interest and delight ; he did not care a bit for hearing that he was not handsome, for he knew that he had a good square nose and chin, and a complexion that weather would not spoil—much more serviceable personal properties to an adventurer than a rosy-red and snowy-white beauty, such as is the fashion at Court.

When the old Cobbler had got his measures all right,

he began to consider of the buttons for the new suit. "Now for the buttons; what shall the buttons be?" said he, thoughtfully. "Buttons of caution, prudence, pleasantness, or what?"

"If it would be convenient and becoming, I should like to have one of each," interposed Tuflongbo, modestly.

"You would like to have what we call a set of harlequin buttons," said the Cobbler. "Very well; so shall it be—harlequin buttons, and trimmings to match. And I daresay you will limit your luggage to a knapsack and a walking-stick? Yes—in that case a suit of chameleon-cloth is the thing. Clad in that, you will have a change for all weathers, and a costume appropriate for all occasions."

And thus was it finally decided. A suit of chameleon-cloth, with harlequin buttons, and trimmings to match, was to be Tuflongbo's travelling garb; his shoes being square-toed, double-soled, and with nails in the heels. He was further provided with a cap having a broad brim and a belt round it, but no jewel or feather for mere display; with a leathern knapsack, small, yet convenient, and with a staff which had a mountaineer's spike at one end and a crook at the other.

It was far from being a splendid costume, but it had many excellent and serviceable qualities. Tuflongbo was satisfied with it himself, and Mulberry gave it his complete approval; so the magical tailor-machines were instantly set to work, and in a very few minutes the Fairykin stood fully equipped for his life of adventure. The Cobbler then bade him transfer his father's gold coin from the pocket of his worn-out home-made suit to that of his new chameleon coat; and this being done, he

wished him good luck wherever he might journey; and Tuflongbo returned with Mulberry to exhibit himself to his mother and the fairy-nurse, who said his clothes were very well put together, considering they had had no hand in making them.

And the same night the Wiseacre gave an entertainment to his son's young friends, to celebrate his coming of age and the putting on of the chameleon suit.

CHAPTER XI.

TUFLONGBO PERFORMS A GREAT STATE SERVICE.

IT was just at this period that a very remarkable and important event was being daily expected and looked for in Sheneland. It may, perhaps, be necessary to state, for the information of such persons as are not deeply read in Shenelandic History, that there is an ancient law in the Country beyond the Moon which prohibits the accession of males to its throne. The Fairies will have none but a Queen to reign over them.

Tuflongbo was born in the reign of Queen Russet, who had one son, Prince Goldheart, but no daughter to take her crown. She was now growing old and weary with cares of State, though a successor was as yet unprovided. In this emergency, many cabinet councils were called to take the matter into consideration, but without result. Oracle was then appealed to, and she only repeated what she had said many times already—namely, that the nation must have patience and live in hope—a fair princess, good and beautiful, would in due time be

found for Sheneland ; and with this renewed assurance all were content to wait.

While the promised event was still hanging in the balance, many speculations as to its prompt or remote fulfilment were hazarded ; and it need not be an occasion for surprise that now and then such speculations were mentioned in Tuflongbo's hearing, and naturally awakened his loyalty, his curiosity, his ambition, and his spirit of adventure.

Oracle had proclaimed that when the royal Princess was found, she would be recognised by a star of brilliant dewdrops on her forehead ; and it straightway occurred to Tuflongbo that the glorious mission of her discovery might be reserved for him. By dint of dwelling on the idea, and turning it over and over in his thoughts, he at length became assured that it was so ; and one splendid, sunshiny morning, he took his staff in his hand, and went down alone into the labyrinth of Tanglewood to seek for his future sovereign and mistress, by the appointed sign.

Let it not be imagined that Tuflongbo, in cultivating the peculiar inclinations of his genius hitherto, had learnt nothing but the arts of adventure. Though in all active exercises he was as skilful as Larkspur himself, and second only to Chickweed in his acquaintance with the ways, customs, and capacities of wild creatures, he also possessed a varied and extensive knowledge of Shenelandic literature, which knowledge was now a mighty help to him in seeking the Princess.

He had read in history how, when, and where previous Queens of his country had been found ; and, passing by all lowly herbs and noxious plants, he hunted diligently in rose-cups, lily-bells, and other kindred places, but for a long while without success. He was not discouraged,

however ; and as the day grew to noon, and the heat increased, he went into a cool and shady thicket near the Enchanted Bower, where trickled a bright rivulet, and there lay down to rest and sleep, that he might renew his search with fresh vigour when the glowing sun became rather less powerful.

How long he slept he never knew, but he was awakened suddenly by the soft, low melody of bells ; and, raising himself on his elbow, he looked round with ever-gathering wonder and admiration as the Elfin chimes swelled louder and merrier through the sunny air. At the distance of scarcely three paces there rose a graceful flowering fern, that swayed gently to and fro, fanned by the wings of a multitude of delicate Zephyrs. A solemn and stately little Fairy sat by on one of the tallest leaves, keeping watch like a nurse ; and when Tuflongbo gained courage to approach and look at her charge, he saw a beautiful fair little creature laid between two airy blossoms of the fern, with a brilliant star of dew-drops on her forehead, and gossamer robes of regal tints wrapping her dainty, delicate form.

He uttered an irrepressible exclamation of delight, when immediately the solemn little Fairy who kept watch nodded her head at him and announced, " I am Mother Dignity, and this is Princess Osmunda, your future Queen ! "

Tuflongbo knew it already, and clapt his hands with enthusiastic congratulation, while the chorus of the bells rose into a joyous clamour, and all the Echoes whispered far and near, " A Queen is found ! a Queen is found ! "

Thus was the news of the long-expected event carried to Elfin Court, and instantly a royal procession set out

to receive the Princess and carry her in triumph to the palace. Queen Russet appeared with Prince Goldheart, and all the chief officers of State around her ; and being come to the Flowering Fern, where the young Princess lay airily cradled by the Zephyrs, she recognised her forthwith as her successor, and the accustomed homage was at once paid to the little Star-crowned Maiden.

Tuflongbo had never been in such radiant company before, but he maintained his self-possession undisturbed, and it was remarked by many that when the beautiful new Princess opened her serene blue eyes, *his* was the first face on which they rested. Singular to relate, she shrugged her plump little white shoulders, and crowed and chuckled, as if she recognised something very funny and very pleasant in it ; and from that moment may be dated the respectful devotion and attachment which the famous traveller manifested in the service of his beloved sovereign.

Queen Russet personally acknowledged her obligations to Tuflongbo for the great State service he had performed in discovering the Princess who was to succeed her ; and, after the settlement of a few necessary preliminaries, the procession prepared to return to Elfin Court, he being graciously invited to accompany it, and to take part in the festivities and ceremonies of the Coronation.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CORONATION OF QUEEN OSMUNDA.

THESE festivities and ceremonials were extremely grand and gaudy. The royal pages and Court officials were dressed in gorgeous new suits, as also were the Knights Fairy selected to form Queen Osmunda's guard of honour, and the fair bevy of Elves chosen to attend on her person. Muffin, master of the ceremonies, came out very resplendent in a complete tight fit of azure decked with stars ; Grand Pomp, his assistant heralds Trig and Tart, and the trumpeters, were all provided with fresh golden reeds and banners of brilliant poppy silk. But the gayest amongst the gay, and the merriest amongst the merry, was still Tuflongbo, in his changeable, chameleon suit, which was green in the morning for the hunt, scarlet at noon for the feast, and rainbow-hued, frosted with silver at night for the dance.

One of the most important personages who graced the Coronation was Mother Dignity, now elevated to the responsible office of Mistress of the Robes to Queen Osmunda ; and to her favour and countenance it was that Tuflongbo owed much of his entertainment at Court ; but for her kindness, by reason of the etiquette which fenced round the solemnities of the Coronation, he might have been quite lost in the crowd, notwithstanding his distinguished national service.

The festivities opened with a magnificent ball on the evening of the Princess's discovery, she looking on from the lap of Queen Russet with wonder and admiring de-

light. Prince Goldheart and Prince Glee figured away elegantly on this occasion, and Princess Trill threw all the Court into ecstasy by singing a song after supper in honour of the new Queen. The next day there was a grand chase in the forest, when dog Worry signalled himself so valorously that he was elected captain of the Queen's kennels by the unanimous consent of his companions. After the chase there was a hunting feast, and after the hunting feast there was a concert of sylvan music, and after the concert of sylvan music there was a most comical pantomime to finish up the night, which sent everybody to bed aching with laughter, but the following morning all the fashionable world of Sheneland was astir betimes to take part in the honours and glories of the Coronation.

Not a bell on hill or in dale but was ringing and ringing its loudest; not a little bird on bough or in bush but was carolling and carolling its sweetest; not a playful Zephyr floating in the air but carried the tune of good news to the remotest corner of the land. Tufiongo had never before felt so happy or light at heart as he did on that memorable day of days!

The royal procession formed at noon precisely, and passed into the Grand Hall of the palace, where the ceremony was to be performed. Grand Pomp took the lead, bearing the proclamation, written out in letters of gold upon white satin, and having the seal of State attached to it. Trig and Tart supported him on either hand, and immediately behind followed the trumpeters with their trumpets, ready to blow a blast as soon as the concerted signal was given. Down each side of the hall were ranged, three deep, the Court officials, according to rank; the centre being kept free for their Majesties

and immediate attendants. Expectation was on tip-toe, and Tuflongbo, who had had a place appointed him near the chief entrance, was listening, breathless, for the first note of the coming of the Queens, when Solemn, the Lord Chamberlain, and Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, flung wide the doors and strutted in, shouting, "Homage to her most gracious Majesty Queen Russet!" And everybody bowed low thrice, as she walked up the hall to the dais whereon stood the throne. Having reached it, she paused and looked round on her faithful subjects with wan yet tender eyes; then waited until again the voices of Solemn, Lord Chamberlain, and of Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, announced, "Homage to her most gracious Majesty Queen Osmunda!" And the fair young Princess appeared, followed by Elf Transformation and a most brilliant Court.

Immediately then the trumpeters blew three resounding blasts, and, as they died away, Grand Pomp stood forward and read aloud the style and title of both Sovereigns, challenging any there present to dispute the rightful claim of Queen Osmunda to the crown of Sheneland as successor to Queen Russet. An unbroken silence for the next five minutes pervaded the hall, during which Elf Transformation, with her magical wand, gently touched the brow of each Sovereign; whereupon all beheld Queen Russet lift from her own head the royal crown, and place it on that of Queen Osmunda, who knelt before her with eyes meekly veiled.

While this solemn act was being done, a slow strain of music filled the air, and Tuflongbo covered his face, as did the rest, feeling, he knew not why, inexpressibly sad. It continued for some time, dirge-like and dreary, but

gradually changed and swelled into notes of triumph, and, looking up once more, he beheld Queen Osmunda seated on the golden throne, bearing the sceptre, but the discrowned Queen was gone. Prince Goldheart, her son, stood at the Sovereign's right hand, and Mother Dignity at her left, the Royal Pages and Maids of Honour being grouped behind on the dais.

Queen Osmunda having again received the homage of her subjects, then proceeded to exercise her royal prerogative of granting honours and favours to all who had any request to prefer, each person being presented to her by a responsible official of the Court. Mother Dignity herself brought forward Tuflongbo's claims, and, with a smile of the most winning kindness, Queen Osmunda asked what boon he would best like to receive at her royal hands.

Without a moment's hesitation, he replied, "Let me be your most gracious Majesty's devoted traveller and adventurer."

"Your petition is granted, Tuflongbo!" said the Queen. "Be loyal and brave, and may every success attend on your enterprises!"

The delighted Fairykin bowed low, with his hand on his heart, then drew back from before the throne; and this same evening, having received his commission, signed by the Queen's hand and sealed with the seal of State, he took his leave of the court and its splendours, and returned to his father's house to prepare for his great journey.



TUFLONGBO'S GREAT JOURNEY.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FAREWELL FEAST.

WHEN Tuflongbo had received his credentials, and had been proclaimed Queen Osmunda's adventurer throughout the length and breadth of Shene-land, he rallied his chosen and disciplined friends around him, and commanded them to make ready for a speedy departure on a great journey in search of Ogres. Then, according to an immemorial custom, the wise Mulberry and the tender Lupine called an assemblage of the acquaintance of the family, both old and young, and gave a splendid entertainment to celebrate their son's launch into his life of travel and adventure.

Rudbeakia and Parsley Gourd and Sycamore, arrived amongst the earliest guests, bringing their best compliments, their best appetites, and their best pipes to smoke after the feast. Next appeared Chickweed, wearing a short gown and a black cap; for he had just attained his first degree as a Wiseacre, much against his will, and had been obliged to take his name off Tuflongbo's drill-list in consequence. He looked ex-

ceedingly dejected and untidy, having barely allowed himself time to dress, and when he presented himself amongst the dignified elders of the Society to which he now belonged, they received him with coolness, and made whispered comments on his negligence, saying that he was hardly ready with his black cap hind-side before, and his coat was already torn in half a dozen places. Snub was no longer a tangled clew of a puppy, but a set dog, profoundly devoted to his master's service for consolation. Wild Sorrel came next, also wearing the cap and robes of a bachelor Wiseacre; and as it was his first public appearance in that character, and he supported it in a superior manner, Gourd solemnly congratulated him. Wild Sorrel made a precise and punctilious reply to the bulky ancient, being anxious not to shock his feelings, but a few minutes afterwards he was overheard whispering to Chickweed, "I wish I were going off on a search for adventures with dear old Tuf; and don't you, Chick?" To which Chickweed responded with a mournful "Ah, yes, indeed!" and shook his head over the sympathising Snub.

The miscellaneous company now poured in fast, and when they were all seated the hero of the day, who had hitherto kept himself in the background, came forward, leading his chosen band of adventurers, who were immediately recognised with three cheers a-piece—as the persevering Canary, the energetic Chamomile, the light-heeled Larkspur, the audacious Larch, the expectant Gooseberry, and the reckless Mustard—perfectly disciplined, fully equipped, and in the very best of good spirits.

Everybody drunk their health and wished them luck; and when they took their places at the board they were

served with the choicest delicacies,—some inconsiderate guest observing thereupon that it would probably be a long time ere they again sat down to such a feast as was now spread before them. But the ardent adventurers refused to allow such a thought to damp their present enjoyment or future hopes, and acquitted themselves towards the dainty viands like hungry heroes proof against every emergency.

The conversation very naturally turned on the object Tuflongbo had in view for this, his first great journey—namely, the discovery of Ogres; and several of the elders had anecdotes to relate concerning their peculiar ways and customs, gathered either from their own personal observation or from the legendary lore of their progenitors.

Rudbeakia remembered seeing one in the wilds of Nod when he was very young, and described him as altogether fearsome and appalling—saucer-eyed, wolf-toothed, and so ravenous that fifty plump little Fairykins were barely enough for his supper. Gourd had heard of another, who carried his head—and that a very ugly one—under his arm, instead of wearing it on his shoulders, in a seemly and proper manner. Then Wild Sorrel lifted up his testimony, and gave some most remarkable evidence on the matter. He stated that his fairy godmother, who was a hot-tempered person, was always in the habit of threatening, when he was naughty, to throw him to a horrid Ogre of her acquaintance, named Squintaskew. The witty Lychnis here interrupted him, and begged to be informed how it was, then, that his frolicsome friend had escaped, and sat there amongst them in safety at that moment. To which Wild Sorrel, settling his cap of Wiseacre more firmly on his head

replied with great dignity that though his fairy god-mother frequently threatened him with this penalty, she had never executed it—and why? Because he was so excellent and beautifully-behaved a Fairykin that Squintaskew would have rejected him as *far too good to eat!*

Lychnis, Sardo and three other intimate friends of Wild Sorrel stared incredulously at this assertion, and the vast assembly, indignant at their want of faith, immediately resolved to *prove* it—and to prove also that all who did not believe him were neither more nor less than whiffs of tobacco smoke!

The discussion seemed verging on a quarrel, for Wild Sorrel had mounted on his chair, and raising his gown with one hand in a legal bunch at the small of his back, while he extended the other in an elegant oratorical attitude, was preparing to address the assembly, when the courteous Mezereon pulled him down, and whispered that Lupine and Elves were present. Thus recalled to good behaviour, he dropped hastily into his seat, lashing out a final argument at his opponents to the effect that they could not *prove* that they were *not* whiffs of tobacco smoke, when Tuflongbo closed the discussion by quoting in an airy manner a bit of that proverbial philosophy which he had acquired under the instructions of the just Rudbeakia—

“A fool,” said he, “can deny more in an hour than a thousand Wiseacres can prove in a thousand years!” a remark that was welcomed with loud acclamations by old and young.

Perfect harmony was then restored, and the pleasantness of the celebration was not again broken.

When the feast came to a conclusion, Lupine with-

drew to her bower with her friends, and Mulberry lit his pipe of wisdom as a signal for the rest ; whereupon a vast cloud was blown, on which Tufiongbo was exalted to the skies—all his chosen companions coming in for a share of praises too. Meanwhile the future travellers took leave quietly of their friends, regretting much that Chickweed was not to be of their band ; for his distress at being unable to go on the great journey was most touching and pathetic to witness. Wild Sorrel at length kindly undertook to prove to him the folly of regret, and carried him off for a walk into the garden, and there presently left him very happy in an old crow's nest. On coming back with this consoling report, Tufiongbo embraced his legal friend, and said he wished he could have numbered him in his company ; to which Wild Sorrel gracefully replied, "Never mind, Tuf, some of us must sacrifice our inclinations to the public good. Fun is my element, and between you and me, I believe I shall find many openings for practical jokes in the law. Good-bye, old fellow, and good luck to both of us, for I am sure we shall deserve it !

It was now drawing towards the hour which Oracle had mentioned as the most propitious for the adventurers to set forth on their travels ; so they shook hands all round. Tufiongbo took a tender farewell of his father, his mother, and the fairy-nurse, and, lest his feelings should be too much for his control did he linger, gave an immediate order to march.

And away they marched in slow time, the song Canary sang almost drowned in the volleys of cheers that pursued them. Hurrah ! Hurrah-ah !! Hurrah-ah-ah !!!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WEEDY LITTLE WAIF OF THE CRAG.

THE band of adventurers never looked back once, but marched steadily forward towards the Chief City of Shene-land, up the straight street running through its midst, and out by the Spring Gate, which rose like a rainbow arch of hope and promise in the serene blue air. Many groups and single persons were pressing forth into the open country besides themselves, but they kept well together, and were presently left alone on a south wending track, which, after crossing a beautiful, undulating meadow-plain, ran along by that river where Tuflongbo had his adventure with the Ondines. Being come to the spot on its banks where grew the weeping beech-tree, he called a halt of his followers, and after detailing his own temptation and narrow escape, warned them not to be drawn aside from the path by any allurements, obstacles, or dangers that might offer themselves.

"Beyond this point," said he, "all is as much unknown country to me as to you. I have found no chart of it, nor so much as a guess at its natural history anywhere. Be ready, therefore, and on the watch for whatever may happen; for I should die of shame were it told in Shene-land that Tuflongbo led forth adventurers in quest of Ogres, and was himself taken by stratagem unawares!"

His comrades answered with a shout that they would be prompt to do their duty, and ready, ay, ready, to follow their leader whithersoever he might choose to go; and with this cordial assurance of goodwill to support

him, Tuflongbo stepped out gallantly once more, and they continued their march by the river until nightfall.

It would have been wise had they stopped then, and bivouacked till the morning ; but their ardour was such that they must needs hurry onwards, stumbling often in the gloom, and wearying themselves quite in vain as it proved ; for, after tramping through the darkness, when dawn broke they found themselves at the foot of the beech-tree where Tuflongbo had called his first halt, not having made the least progress during all those long hours of night-marching ! From this it was evident that they were already come to enchanted ground.

About a stone's throw from the bank, perched on his crag, sat the quaint little weedy Waif, making his toilette airily in the morning breeze. He recognized the leader of the Adventurers with a merry grin, and offered to convoy him and his people down the river on a raft of reeds, which was moored to the shadow of a crooked branch that overhung the water. Tuflongbo hesitated before accepting his courteous proposal, and thought fit to take counsel on the matter with his companions, who had already been made aware of the weedy Waif's treacherous and mischievous disposition.

"We should get along with beautiful swiftness, but we should run many more risks than on land," said he, stating the case with great impartiality. "By keeping to the path and marching in the daylight we shall advance slowly but surely ; by entrusting ourselves to the raft on the river we may make a sudden spurt, and we may also make a grievous wreck. What say you then ? Speak, my friends."

"I think it would be the wisest to pursue our first

course and not forsake the land," said the persevering Canary.

"I don't see that. I vote we all be ducks, and take to the water!" cried the audacious Larch.

"And if harm come of it, who cares?" asked Mustard.

"Not I, for one," answered Chamomile. "I am used to calamities, and always get the better of them."

"I am safe in every case," observed Larkspur; "it would not overtax my powers to turn a somerset across the river if the raft upset."

"Something is sure to happen whatever we do, and I believe it is coming now," said Gooseberry, and looked about expectingly.

The majority of the voices being decidedly in favour of the raft, Tuflongbo intimated to his weedy little friend on the crag that he and his band would be glad to avail themselves of his amiable services as steersman; and all the adventurers gaily embarked.

"You must sit fair to balance the raft," said the Waif; and then, getting astride of his straw, he swirled quickly round to catch the main current of the stream, and floated triumphantly away, towing his freight after him in the highest glee.

For some time all went well; the river was one sunny dance of Ripples, and wherever rock or crag peered out there crowded the Eddies at their feet, while the frosted Spray and feathery Foam took refuge on their highest crests. But the trees, and bushes, and flowery banks went by with wonderful rapidity; and at length their beautiful greenness gave place to precipitous barriers of stone which enclosed the river like walls.

Tuflongbo held his peace, but he began to think within

himself that they had done unwisely in abandoning the shore. Looking behind him, the rocks shut out the sun, and the many windings of the stream made them appear like bastion beyond bastion in an ever-growing gloom. Looking forward, the gray cliffs were equally formidable, but on the edge of the most distant there always gleamed a ray of brightness, which caused him to hope that the next bend of the river would bring the raft once more into daylight; but when they came near, it as invariably faded away. The Ripples that had played about the Adventurers when they started on their perilous voyage now gave place to heavy Waves, that bore the frail raft to and fro, threatening every moment to dash it to pieces on the rocks, while the weedy little Waif, astride of his straw, took no heed to its danger except to enjoy it.

In this crisis Tuflongbo's wits were on the alert. He perceived that he was betrayed, and, passing the word round in whispers to each of his companions, warned them to be ready to attempt an escape the instant he gave the signal. Then, waiting his opportunity, he leant forward on the raft and parleyed a little while with the treacherous Waif.

"Whither away so fast, unskilful steersman?" asked he; but the Waif only glanced wickedly over his shoulder and laughed. "Those laugh best who laugh last!" thought Tuflongbo; and he stood up on the swaying raft, prepared for a spring to the rocks, all the rest imitating his example.

The river was now rushing down a descent so rapid, that it seemed like the arch of the bow they had passed under the day before when leaving the Chief City of Sheneland; and it became evident that it was the

weedy Waif's intentions to bear them all away to the Water World ; and he would undoubtedly have succeeded in his wicked design had the Adventurers been under a leader less prompt, brave, and enterprising than Tuflongbo.

After the lapse of a few acutely anxious moments, the raft drifted abreast of a narrow ledge of rocks on the farther side of the river ; then Tuflongbo shouted "Now," and springing altogether, four of the band at once made sure their footing upon it.

These were the Leader himself, Larkspur, Mustard, and Gooseberry. Chamomile fell so far short of it as to drop into deep water, and Tuflongbo watched fearfully while his energetic companion battled with the Waves that tried to beat him back within reach of the weedy Waif. Sometimes the Spray dashed quite over his head and he disappeared, but the next moment he was seen striking out for the cliffs, and after an interval of severe buffeting he gained them, and clambered up by his comrades, perfectly sound in wind and limb. Canary, in taking his leap, had aimed too low, and only contrived to cling with hands and teeth to the slippery ledge ; but after hanging in this imminent peril for some time, he succeeded in drawing himself up until his chin rested upon it ; and so persevered in his struggles until he also stood in safety beside the Leader.

It now only remained to rescue Larch, who, with unexampled audacity, had jumped upon a low rock that lay midway the river, and was now figuring there in a thousand taunting antics before the disappointed Waif. Tuflongbo hailed him to leave his dangerously isolated refuge ; for they on the ledge could see that of which Larch was entirely unaware—namely, that a

strong force of Eddies was close round his rock, and swelling higher and higher, urged on by the mighty Waves, until he was in the centre of a black Whirlpool, which threatened every moment to engulf him.

He now appeared to discern his danger, and, to the relief of his companions, to be preparing to meet it with that fertility of resource for which he was distinguished. The weedy Waif had come to an anchor in the smoothest part of the stream, wearing a most comical, tragical expression of disappointment on his bell-shaped visage. The raft, swayed by the current, drifted to the edge of the Whirlpool, and Larch, measuring the distance with his eye, made a sudden spring for it, and tried to cut the cords by which the treacherous steersman had towed it along before. It now became a struggle for life or death betwixt the two, terrible to behold. The Waif put forth all his strength to get back into the main tide with the raft and its one passenger, while Larch exerted himself to the utmost to prevent what would certainly have been fatal to himself. After a desperate tussle he at last succeeded in severing the tow-ropes, and not only that, but in tilting the weedy Waif off his straw; when he immediately, to everybody's admiration and delight, turned over on his back, and floated away, heels uppermost, down the river, until he was quite out of sight!

Tuflongbo and those upon the rock-ledge with him set up a loud cheer, which stimulated Larch to make one audacious spring—and there he was, safe landed again amongst his companions. This place of refuge hung on the face of the precipitous cliffs, about half way between the abyss of foaming waters and the calm blue of the upper air; and how to ascend the towering

wall became now a question for the most careful deliberation. The inequalities *below* were many, but above there did not appear to be footing for a bird; and while the Adventurers were consulting, the gray Mists and Shadows of Night began to look down gloomily upon them from the top, thus making their position the more perilous and uncertain.

A spirit of weariness and discontent then showed itself amongst Tufongbo's band for the first time; but he dexterously crushed it out at once by saying, "Let us have no strength wasted in useless regrets and complainings. The time once past is past for ever; the thing once done is done for ever! Our mistakes are our warnings, and our sufferings are our experience. If the heart of any amongst you fail him already, let him return to the peaceful pursuits and safe monotony of home: this difficulty we are in now is but an earnest of what those must expect who would devote themselves to a life of Adventure. Well do I know that there are braggarts whose prowess lies in their tongues, but such I did not look to find amongst *you!*"

This grave rebuke was received with silence, but each of the band immediately testified by his actions that the Leader was not mistaken in their metal. Larkspur volunteered to scale the steep rocks in search of a way for the rest to ascend, and forthwith began to mount by means of his difficult fly-steps, every eye following him most anxiously. He had not gone far, however, when he was observed to halt, and then suddenly to project himself, as it were, into the solid rock, leaving nothing but the double-soles and the nails in the heels of his shoes visible to his waiting comrades below. These also gradually disappeared; and it seemed as if the

agile Larkspur had been swallowed up to be beheld no more, when all at once his voice was heard shouting in the wildest glee that he had made a wonderful discovery of a Cave lit up with Lamps of Gems, shining everywhere upon the walls and roof!

"We must enter that miraculous Cave," said Tuf-longbo. "Such a place is mentioned in many traditions of Ogres. Come, my brave comrades, let us endeavour to follow the agile Larkspur with what speed we may: the enterprise is arduous, but for that only the more glorious if we make it successful. Amongst the Elfin Gifts that I received at my birth, there was a Spider's thread to hold fast and spin true, of which we will now make use. I will go first with the end in my hand, and each of you, my valiant friends, must cling on to it behind, and so I doubt not but that we shall reach the Cave."

And then the Leader reeled out the thread and started, all the rest following in his steps, and grasping the slender stay, until at length, after many a slip and slide, many a false move and stumble up the slippery ascent, they contrived to gain the spot where Larkspur stood awaiting them. Most of them were exhausted and half fainting with the fatiguing nature of their recent efforts, but as soon as Tuf-longbo recovered breath enough to speak, he cheered them all by saying, "There is many a task that seems impossible until we try it; but after this great triumph let us never more distrust our hearts, our heads, or our feet, for they have served us bravely on this occasion!"

"So they have!" cried the Adventurers; "so they have, Tuf-longbo!"

"And in honour of their constancy, let me propose

that we henceforth and for ever reject the term *Impossible* from our travelling vocabulary!" said the Leader, striking while the iron of their fervour was hot.

"It will be a worthy celebration," replied Canary, and the rest acquiescing with equal cordiality in Tuf-longbo's suggestion, a vote was passed obliterating the word *Impossible* from all the Adventurers' future thoughts and conversation—a very important measure to have been accomplished so early in their journey, and one fraught with splendid results afterwards.

The Leader now shook himself straight in his Chameleon suit, and, advancing a few paces, looked down a narrow, sloping, funnel-shaped entrance into the Cave, while all his band crowded close upon him to behold its wonders too.

"Magnificent!" cried they, as with one voice. "Oh! radiant, dazzling, most glorious!" and so stood awestruck at the fine spectacle that flashed upon their astonished gaze.

Tuf-longbo then made a brief harangue congratulating them and himself on the discovery of this singular place at the outset of their Adventures, and after reminding them of the watchfulness and caution that might be called for in their explorations, he bade them under all circumstances preserve their self-possession and dignity, and then prepared, as their Leader, to enter first this Enchanted Cave-Palace of Gems.

None held back, and the instant the last of the daring seven had passed through the entrance and over the threshold of the glittering chamber, a mighty gate of rock clanged to behind them with the sound of thunder; and there they were, caught, though they knew it not, in Ogre Gulmalog's trap!

CHAPTER XV.

OGRE GULMALOG AND HIS BUBBLE-BLOWER.

NEVER, surely, was trap so beautifully baited before as this trap of the dreadful Ogre Gulmalog. And it was beautiful, too, in itself, having walls set round with a thousand columns of crystal, and a dome-shaped roof tinted throughout like intersecting rainbow arches. The floor was of coral, red and rare, and in the midst stood a low table of agate, spread over with the richest and costliest dainties—cream-tart, trifle, syllabub, ambrosia, pie, custard, and tipsy cake; and negus and nectar in goblets of cut topaz with handles of gold. Innumerable lamps gleamed from the crystal columns and from the central flower-knot of the roof—lamps of ruby, emerald, sapphire, carbuncle, amethyst, and opal, with lights of diamonds twinkling and flashing through their transparent globes of exquisite colour.

A profound silence reigned throughout this enchanted scene, which the Adventurers, overcome with admiration and delight, did not attempt to break for a considerable interval. But at length the Leader spoke proud words of congratulation, and invited himself and his companions to supper at the luxuriously-furnished table, when all immediately became seated around it, Tuf-longbo presiding from the golden throne at the upper end with superlative grace and dignity.

The travellers were, as may be well imagined, exceedingly hungry after their long march and perilous sail on the river, and when they were served, each prepared

to enjoy the welcome feast with keen appetite. There was consequently but little conversation, everybody being for the time quite absorbed and busy, and this was but reasonable and natural at the beginning; only, strange to say, the silence continued, and the more the adventurers ate the less satisfied they appeared to be.

They took from every dish in turn, and tried them all, but nothing seemed to diminish; and when they were tired of lifting their hands to their mouths, they leant back in their chairs, and said, disconsolately, that they felt as empty as when they sat down. Canary alone persevered, but he finally gave in too, and proclaimed himself no better off than the rest; adding that he had made the round of the board, and had tasted everything, and had found all of precisely the same flavour—that is, of the flavour of froth or snow-smoke. And his experience was the experience of all his companions and of their Leader also. But still the lamps of gems twinkled, and the table seemed as well furnished as ever.

“Shall we try again?” said Tuflongbo, after an interval of repose; and once more they set to work, and worked till their jaws and elbows ached, but for no good; when they gave up they were just as before—hungry, and hollow as drums.

“’Tis of no use—we are all swallowing shadows!” then said the Leader; “and truly we deserved something more substantial after our arduous march and miraculous escape from the river. Let each of us regale with a crust of his own loaf; though it be but plain fare, it is better than *this*.”

As Tuflongbo spoke, there rang through the chamber the echo of opening and shutting distant doors, which gradually drew nearer and nearer until the rock gate

which had clanged to when the Adventurers entered split open with a mighty noise, and, guided by invisible hands, in rushed a second table, covered with smoking dishes of fish, flesh, and fowl, hot from the pot and the spit.

"It must be admitted that our host, whoever he is, practises the virtue of hospitality," cried the Leader, his spirits rising with the savoury steam. "Let us fall to, my friends, and save our crusts for another occasion."

So each restored his crust, which he had just begun to munch, to his wallet, and applied himself with fresh vigour to the enchanted feast; but alas! and alas! with no more profit than at first.

"This is too much!" then cried Tuflongbo, in a rage, and sprang up from his golden throne, and paced the chamber in the greatest perturbation of mind. His followers regarded him with dismay, and endeavoured to compose him, but he would not be composed. "I wish," said he, fuming hotly, "the churlish knave who has dared to play us these sorry tricks would only show himself!"

Immediately, from nobody knew whither, there appeared in the midst of the band an exceedingly small Dwarf, black and ugly, with a ring through his nose, who louted low before the Leader, and screamed in a shrill, unpleasant voice, "Here I am, Tuflongbo, at your service—Gulmalog's Bubble-Blower."

Tuflongbo returned his bow in a surly fashion, and then for several minutes stood regarding him with severe and silent displeasure.

"You are very hard to please," said the Dwarf. "What more could you desire than you have had? I have blown you my best bubbles."

"But bubbles are not our natural food—they leave us

as hungry as they found us ; we require something more solid," replied Tuflongbo.

"Will you try these, then?" asked the Dwarf, and drew from his pocket a handful of dull pebbles.

"What is the use of them? They are but stones, and would break our teeth." And the Leader dexterously tilted them out of his palm, so that they rolled abroad over the coral floor and were lost.

"You shall repent it!" shrieked the Dwarf, and vanished as mysteriously as he had appeared, leaving the rock gate open.

Tuflongbo now drew forth his crust again, and this time he ate it up, and felt much refreshed thereby, all his companions imitating his example with a like effect. They were then equal to their fate, and began curiously to examine the structure of this Cave of Gems, the Leader making a sketch of it, while Larkspur and others, with his permission, climbed up to the lamps and tore down some of the finest to carry away as spoil. But it is a remarkable fact that as soon as they were detached from their places, they lost all their brilliance, and became as unattractive as the Dwarf's handful of pebbles which Tuflongbo had chucked away.

While the band were thus occupied, all at once they heard a heavy advancing step, and the blowing as of a very stout creature short of breath ; and the Leader had barely time to cry out, "Let every one lie down, shut his eyes, and feign sleep," and to get the command executed, when there entered the great Ogre Gulmalog, led by the hideous little Dwarf with the ring through his nose.

"Where are they?" growled the Ogre, in a voice that sounded as if it came out of his boots.

"Here," said the Dwarf, and pointed to the hapless Adventurers lying in a ring on the floor, apparently sound asleep.

Ogre Gulmalog eyed them greedily, and rubbed his hands for joy. "Which shall I have for supper?" considered he; "they look so nice I think I could eat 'em all—yes, they look so nice, I think I could eat 'em all!"

"Surely, my master, they will be just enough. And how will you have them done—devilled or grilled?" asked the Dwarf.

"Grilled; and do them very brown!" answered the Ogre, licking his monstrous lips. And the dwarf immediately gathered up all the Adventurers one after the other into his cook's apron, and ran off with them to the kitchen, his master crying after him to make haste, and let him have them hot, and served up with plenty of tomato sauce.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AWFUL FATE OF GULMALOG'S BUBBLE-BLOWER.

CONSIDER for one moment this painful crisis—Tuflongbo could never afterwards speak of it without a shudder.

As the Dwarf ran towards his kitchen, opening and shutting innumerable doors, and twisting and turning down the most intricate passages, he shook the contents of his apron with vengeful triumph. The Adventurers rolled over and over—now heads uppermost, and now heels—and were as nearly as possible frightened out of their wits; so that when Gulmalog's Bubble-Blower emptied them out upon the floor they were bedazed and

bemuddled to such an excess, that he trussed them up and skewered them like pigeons without one of them having strength or sense to resist. This done, he ranged them neatly in a row on the dresser, and proceeded to blow the Fire, which in his absence had sunk very low.

While he was thus employed in this manner, the hapless travellers had plenty of time to reflect on their desperate situation, and at length Glimmer presently said aloud—
 "I can assure Glimmer's Bubble-Blower that he will never find *me* grateful for his voracious master's supper."

"Nor me," said Mustard. "Nor me," said Mustard. And so said they all.

"What's that?" cried the Dwarf. "You won't be grilled calmly, won't you? We shall see. Wait a bit!" And then he laid down his bellows for a moment, and took up a flour-dredger, and dredged them all over with flour until they looked exactly like a miller and his men; after which he returned to blowing the Fire.

But the Fire was sulky and would not burn. It sputtered and crackled, and puffed out volleys of pungent smoke, and Sparks that flew in the Dwarf's face, but neither Flicker nor Flash, Glimmer nor Twinkle, Blaze nor Flame, would show themselves at all. Tufflongbo could not help laughing while Gulmalog's Bubble-Blower muttered over his fruitless task, that the wood was green, and left it to dry while he compounded the tomato sauce. But he sneezed in spite of his valour, when the odious little cook took a handful of salt and sprinkled him and his Adventurers over, and seasoned them duly with pepper, according to his master's taste, for the pepper and salt both were of very strong nature. Then the Dwarf got ready the gridiron, and the dish on

which they were to be served up when ready. But still the Fire continued cold, and as black as the cook himself. Once only had he any hope of it, and that was when very suddenly Blaze darted out of the smoke, and made a rapid speech which he could not understand. But Tuf-longbo understood it, and rejoiced. Blaze bade him not be afraid, for the Salamanders were his friends, and would never lend themselves to grilling him or any of his band; and having given him this comfortable assurance, the good servant dropped down amongst the ashes and disappeared, to the great rage and disappointment of the Bubble-Blower.

"I shall have to make a salad of them, I do believe," snarled he, and ran out into Gulmalog's garden to pick some fresh herbs.

"Now is our time," whispered Tuflongbo. "We were skewered in such a hurry that I have come undone." And then he went quickly down the row and released his followers, who stretched their cramped limbs and immediately jumped off the dresser.

The Leader then made them all hide behind the door, and as the Dwarf entered, bringing his herbs, they sprang out on him with one accord, and overpowered him, in spite of his enraged struggles, and bound him hand and foot, and finally chained him by the ring through his nose to his own spit, and left him dangling, and spinning, and twirling very fast indeed; and the Fire gave him a warm reception, and licked his hands and his face with affectionate glee. And Flicker and Flash, Glimmer and Twinkle, Blaze and Flame came out of their lurking-places forthwith to pay him their fervent compliments; and the frisky Sparks frolicked and danced round him as if his roasting were a jubilee. And there

he very probably dangles, and twirls, and twists to this moment, for he was so exceedingly old, tough, and stringy, that it is not likely he could ever be cooked through.

This act of justice having been performed, Tuflongbo congratulated his followers, thanked them for their cheerful assistance, and consulted as to what should be done next; prophesying to each and all undying honour and glory if they continued to acquit themselves always thus valorously in dangerous circumstances.

Meanwhile Ogre Gulmalog sat in the parlour waiting for his supper, and when he could not wait any longer he sallied forth, and blundered along through the intricate passages, seeking his way to the kitchen: and arriving there, he found his Bubble-Blower chained to his own spit, and all the Adventurers regaling themselves with the delicious tomato-sauce! He burst into a jolly laugh, which finished off with an affected quaver of trepidation, that caused Tuflongbo to think and say: "This big fellow is not brave—I declare he seems afraid of us!" And, on the spur of the moment, he turned sharply about, marched up to the vast Ogre, and cried, "Gulmalog, you are our prisoner!" at the same time, rising on tip-toe, and, with the crook of his staff, tapping his enormous beet-root nose! Gulmalog, thus insulted, shook as if he were made of jelly, dropped on his knees, and supplicated mercy in a most canting, hypocritical whine; but Tuflongbo turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and commanded him to be strictly bound, telling him that his ultimate fate would depend entirely on his own behaviour.

The Leader then compelled him to act as guide through the secret chambers of his Cave; and with

the utmost apparent reluctance, groaning and carrying his head down, the Ogre set out, the seven sprightly Adventurers following close in his footsteps, and poking him on whenever they fancied he lingered. And thus they went through many glittering and gorgeous apartments, continually amazed and delighted at their magnificence, until they came to a deep-sunk door of iron, all barred, bolted, and rusty, from which Gulmalog seemed as if he would have turned aside to pass it by, had not Tuflongbo sternly bidden him stay and open it. So, groaning more heavily than before, he took a great key from his girdle, inserted it in the lock, and turned it thrice; when immediately the mighty gates swung open on their creaking hinges, and the Ogre's dungeons were revealed in all their terrible gloom and horror.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW TUFLONGBO AND HIS FAITHFUL BAND WERE DISPERSED.

"IF there be here any miserable captives, let them speak, and I will deliver them!" cried Tuflongbo, as he plunged into the darkness.

But though his voice rang echoing through and through the vault until it died away in a faint sigh, there was no answer. The Leader of the Adventurers waited, listened, and shouted again, but still without reply. This he did thrice, and finding none to claim his help, he turned round to bid the Ogre lead the way out of his dungeons, when, to his inexpressible

astonishment and dismay, he saw that Gulmalog had disappeared.

Gulmalog had disappeared, and so also had the door by which he had ushered the travellers into the vault—there being now no visible inlet or outlet, but only blank, dank walls, so high that the roof was lost in the gloom. A light, very faint, pale, and cold, filled the dungeon, and a moist atmosphere, which caused a fearful creeping and cringing of the skin, accompanied by an awful chattering of the teeth. Had he not known them so well, Tuflongbo might have been now discouraged by a doubt lest some of his followers were afraid, but no such suspicion came near his mind; and though bewildered, and even annoyed, by this specimen of Ogreish perfidy, he found in it that amount of consolation which the philosophic mind can discover in the most untoward events.

“If it be our fate to go no farther, still we have accomplished the great object of our travels,” said he, in a cheerful voice; “we have verified the existence of Ogres—by some supposed to be an extinct or fabulous race—and have enjoyed large opportunities of studying the private life of one very remarkable personage amongst them. But as this dungeon may be dangerous to our health should we remain in it too long, let us now diligently seek for a way of escape.”

These calm words reassured the Adventurers, and they immediately dispersed themselves through the vault in quest of some opening; but hardly had they been thus employed for the space of an hour, when they heard a threatening, rumbling noise overhead, and looking up in alarm, they saw a trap open in the roof, and Gulmalog's cruel, ugly face gazing down upon



The young Adventurers in Gulmalog's Dungeon.



them, expanded into a broad grin, which displayed a triple row of sharp teeth.

“Make yourselves happy, my little Fairykins!” cried he; “I shall only want one at a time!” And he dropped a line amongst them, suddenly, with a magic hook at the end of it, which began to cast itself about in an attempt to catch them; and though they ran and ran, and turned and turned, and made a thousand desperate efforts to escape it, it at last caught poor Mustard, and Gulmalog instantly drew him up through the trap.

“Never mind me, Tuflongbo, I don’t care!” sang out the gallant little Fairykin, as he vanished; “when Gulmalog tries to eat me, won’t I bite his tongue and make him roar!” And then the trap was closed with a crash, the Ogre proclaiming that he had got enough for the present, and politely requesting those who were left to make themselves as comfortable as circumstances would allow—a sarcasm which added a new sting to their pain.

If they had before sought diligently for an outlet from their prison, they now sought it with the fiery energy of those who know that life depends upon success; but they sought in vain, and were all at once paralysed and struck motionless by a hideous roar which resounded from above.

“Depend upon it, Mustard has bitten the Ogre’s tongue, and perishes not ingloriously!” whispered Tuflongbo; and the next moment the trap rumbled open again, and down came the line with the magic hook at the end of it; and though the captives ran and ran, and turned and turned, nothing availed them, for, after a fierce chase, Chamomile was taken, and hauled up like

his predecessor ; with his last words comforting his companions by an assurance that he had not lost his energy in adversity, and did not despair of a safe and happy deliverance even yet.

It soon appeared that Gulmalog was in the habit of feeding once in every hour ; for scarcely had that interval elapsed, when again the trap opened and the magic hook descended. This time it caught Gooseberry, who said he expected it, and made no more ado.

Resignation to their inevitable lot now for a short space took possession of the hearts of the unfortunate Adventurers ; they sat down sorrowful and despondent, until they were all grown over with blue mould ; but when the Ogre returned to fish for another of the dejected band, they still preserved energy enough to make attempts to baffle his hook and linc. It was to no purpose, however, that they strove to evade them ; for he soon caught Larch, who promised himself a melancholy consolation in pulling Gulmalog's nose before he was eaten, and so vanished through the trap from the sad eyes of his companions. Canary went next, after a very prolonged hunt ; then Larkspur, buoyant and light-hearted as ever, assuring the agonised Leader that he would roll himself into a porcupine-ball, and thus tempt the Ogre to take him all at one greedy bite, when he would expand in his throat, violently kick out his arms and legs, and so choke him.

With such slight hope of rescue as hung on this one chance, Tufongbo contrived to sustain himself through the next terrible hour ; but again at the regular moment creaked open the trap, and Gulmalog's voice sounded from above more gruff and hungry than ever ; from

which it appeared that Larkspur's ingenious plan for his Captain's deliverance had failed.

Now, though Tuflongbo had learnt by a too grave experience that, let Fairykins run as they will, when Ogres hunt for them they must inevitably be caught, he yet did his utmost to circumvent and escape the magic hook: but it took him at last, and, swift, there he was, landed once more in the Ogre's beautiful parlour!

And now occurred a most remarkable and unexpected event, which bore singular testimony to the truth of that disputed statement which Wild Sorrel had made at the Farewell Feast—namely, that Ogres always reject those little Fairykins which are too good to be eaten; not that they *like* to do so, but that it is a rule amongst them which they could not break without infringing their strict code of honour.

The bereft Leader of the Adventurers glanced round the gem-lit Cave, but there were no relics of his hapless followers to be seen, and he prepared himself for the worst—perceiving that Gulmalog, who had looked not ill-natured before he was disappointed of his grilled Fairykins at supper, now betrayed a most ruthless and ferocious temper, snapping and snarling as he filed his teeth, until Tuflongbo, even in that crisis of his fate, made philosophic reflections on his ugliness.

As Gulmalog filed, he also muttered, and the Adventurer, listening heedfully to his mutterings, overheard him say, with such thankful feelings as may be better imagined than described—“Too good to be eaten, are they, the little mites of things!—too good to be eaten, indeed! that is a joke—a funnier I never heard—*too good to be eaten!* I can't get over it. However, this little fellow must make up for his friends; I have

caught a Tartar at last, and, I warrant me, *he* is not too good to be eaten! Let us try. Trot over here, Tuf-longbo, and let me have a look at you. Suppose you end your travels by a journey down my Red Lane."

"Suppose nothing of the sort," replied the Captain, and approached the Ogre with a leisurely dignity befitting the occasion. But as soon as he came within reach, Gulmalog snatched him up, dipped his head into a little that was left of the tomato-sauce, and was just going to bite it off, when a voice at his elbow said distinctly, "Let him go, Gulmalog; Tuf-longbo is FAR too good to be eaten!" and the Ogre, with a roar of rage, disappointment, and hunger, flung him bodily into the salt-cellar.

Tuf-longbo immediately scrambled to his feet and shook himself; then he glanced round, in the hope of seeing his unknown advocate, but no one was visible except the Ogre, who now took him by his Chameleon coat-collar, and, quitting the Cave through the rock-gate, carried him up a winding stair to the top of the cliffs, and after turning him thrice round until he was giddy, there left him, in the midst of a dark night and of heavily-falling rain. It was some time before he recovered his faculties sufficiently to make any survey of his position; but when he did so, he found himself in an entirely new country, and quite alone!

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW LARKSPUR REJOINED TUFLONGBO.

WHEN the gallant Tuflongbo fully realised his melancholy and forsaken condition, he did not sit down to bewail it as a weak-minded adventurer might have done, but braced himself firmly up, set his knapsack straight, took a resolute grip of his staff, and prepared to set out in search of his lost companions, intending to postpone to that necessary duty all further inquiries after the perfidious race of Ogres.

The night was intensely dark, and the rain came down with a will; but Tuflongbo never doubted that each member of his scattered band had been separately ejected from Gulmalog's Cave in the same style as himself, and was, therefore, convinced that he should be able to come on their traces as soon as daylight enabled him to examine the sodden ground. And in this he was not mistaken.

When dawn broke he immediately began his investigations, and before long he detected numerous foot-marks, which, however, tended in various directions; but there could be no uncertainty as to whose they were, for all the Adventurers wore shoes like their Leader—that is, shoes with square toes, double soles, and nails in the heels. Five distinct pairs of impressions he quickly made out, but the sixth pair was missing; and Tuflongbo was almost ready to despair of finding them, when suddenly he became aware of finger-prints in the moist sand, and his heart grew light again, for these finger-prints

were those of Larkspur, who had evidently taken himself off from the scene of his misfortunes, not by running away on his feet, but by a swift wheel-movement, in the practice of which he was singularly skilled.

It now only remained to decide which of the several tracks Tuflongbo should first pursue, and after a few moments of active consideration, he determined to follow Larkspur ; and, without loss of time, he set out, keeping the finger-prints constantly in view.

For many, many fairy miles the lonely Leader plodded on over a wide waste of sand, now whistling and now singing to keep up his spirits, and hoping that the sound of his familiar voice might perchance be heard, and answered by one or another of his faithful band. But it was not. A profound silence and solitude reigned everywhere, and the day was far spent before there appeared any change in the monotony of the landscape. At last, when his feet were growing weary and beginning to lag, he saw the shadow of an enormous head projected along the ground before him, then of another, and another—three heads in all—which appeared to spring but from one pair of shoulders. There was a scant herbage in this part of the plain, and Tuflongbo immediately hid himself amongst it, and looked out sharply for the body that cast this portentous shadow ; and soon he saw it, travelling slowly over the brow of a line of hills—a gigantic Ogre with three heads, having faces all round, and on the centre one a wonderful peaked cap, in the band of which was stuck poor Larkspur, waving in the wind like a feather.

Tuflongbo's heart bounded with joy when he recognised his unhappy comrade in this dangerous and conspicuous situation ; and, stealthily applying his whistle

to his lips, he blew three clear notes to attract his attention. At this the feather in the Ogre's cap was seen briskly to steady itself, to rise up, to peer round, and finally to peer over the top of it in a consequential way; and Larkspur had just one moment given him to detect his Leader amongst the grass, when the Ogre sneezed violently, and the poor Adventurer was shaken down from his look-out in the concussion, and left feebly hanging, as it were, quite out of curl, over the brim of the cap.

As the Ogre tramped heavily past the spot where Tuflongbo lay concealed, the earth under him shook terribly; but as soon as he was gone by, out crept the watchful Adventurer, and stole after him, determined not to lose sight of his three heads until he had rescued Larkspur from his perilous position. But Tuflongbo, when he left the shelter of the reedy grass, had forgotten that the Ogre, having faces all round, must have eyes behind as well as before, which eyes were like those of a lynx, and could not fail soon to spy him out—and spy him out, of course, they did; and, wheeling round rapidly, the Ogre picked him up between his finger and thumb, and, plucking off his singular cap, stuck him also for a feather in the band, beside his unfortunate friend; and then perched it again on his central head, which he wagged triumphantly for ever so long after, to the inexpressible misery of his two ornamental captives. When he was tired of wagging it he kept it still, and then the high-spirited Leader embraced his follower, and they condoled with each other, in mournful terms, upon this untoward style of reunion; but agreed, finally, that it was a comfort not to be alone in their misfortunes.

“I do not feel as if we were in imminent danger,”

remarked Tuflongbo, presently, growing accustomed to his elevation.

"Neither do I," replied Larkspur. "This Ogre is a vegetarian, I believe; and, if so, he will prove of a milder temper than Gulmalog."

Tuflongbo was anxious to know what reason his comrade had for supposing this three-headed Ogre to be a vegetarian.

"Watch and you will see," answered the other. "When he caught me, he was at breakfast in a wood; he dined in a forest; and, when we come to another thicket, I expect he will stop and eat his supper."

Larkspur's information was correct, and his anticipations were not disappointed. A plantation of full-grown pine-trees, cactus, and prickly pears, loomed on the horizon, and as soon as they reached it, the Ogre set to work; and, plucking up the food he wanted by the roots, ate his way straight through the wood. He might have been tracked by the odd leaves, little branches, and chips he dropped, crumb-like, all along the path, as he made his evening meal. It was wonderful to hear his twelve pairs of jaws going at once—crackle, craunch, crack through the toughest bark as easily as through the tenderest foliage; and Tuflongbo's ambitious spirit revelled in the previsions of honour and glory which must accrue to him for having made so surprising a discovery in the natural history of Ogres as this fact of a triple-headed one subsisting entirely on a vegetable diet.

He would have liked to inquire whether his remarkable captor was ever troubled with toothache, from the severity of his masticatory exertions; but a few moments of reflection determined him to practise a wise

forbearance for the present—to hear, see, and say nothing, until, by a discreet observation, he had learned whether this Ogre was or was not a foe to that laudable curiosity that had instigated his great journey in search of adventures.

When they came out at the farther side of the wood, the shades of evening were falling; and after munching up a handful of fir-cones like nuts for his dessert, the Ogre shook the scraps from his doublet, and quickened his pace; from which the hapless Feathers in his cap conjectured that he was drawing near home.

CHAPTER XIX.

CLICKACLOP AND HIS OGRESS.

WHEN at last the Adventurers from their dangerous eminence descried the Ogre's dwelling, it proved to be a vast edifice of unhewn stone, standing under the northern shadow of a great barren mountain. The aspect of the surrounding country was bleak, waste, and dreary in the extreme; for the thriftless Ogre had cleared the ground of trees and bushes without exercising the prudent forethought of planting others; so that he had to travel a considerable distance, when he was hungry, before he could find a sufficient stock of food to appease his appetite.

Neither Tuflongbo nor Larkspur felt particularly cheerful as they approached the massive gates of the castle; but that could not be expected at such a crisis, and their spirits underwent a further fluctuation as the

Ogre stooped down and blew into the keyhole thrice. At the third gust the gates revolved slowly on their hinges, and a comely Ogress advanced with a smile on her broad visage, and asked in a sweet voice how her brave Clickaclop had spent the day. To this Clickaclop replied that he had spent it very pleasantly.

The pair then sat down by their bright wood-fire, and had a long talk about their own private affairs, until the Ogre, suddenly remembering the Feathers in his cap, pulled it off and presented it to his wife, saying he hoped she would like the pretty little fantastical toys he had brought her. The Ogress immediately began to dance the cap round on her hand, exclaiming over the quaking Adventurers in a perfect enthusiasm of admiration, and vowing that she had never seen anything so altogether novel and charming in her life.

"Are they alive?" cried she. "Oh, how nice! How beautifully they do curl and flutter, to be sure!" and then she danced the cap round again, until Tuflongbo's teeth chattered like castanets; and Larkspur, with all his elasticity, was fairly shaken out of breath. This innocent little amusement she continued until she was tired of it, when she hung up the cap on a hook against the wall, and at her lord's command knelt down and proceeded to pull off his boots.

The captive Adventurers kept their eyes wide open, and never winked once while the amiable Ogress performed Clickaclop's toilette for the night. It was a lengthy piece of work, and in some respects also, perhaps a rather peculiar one; for when she had removed his boots, she brought a high stool, mounted upon it, and began to *screw off one of his heads*—that on the left

shoulder—as if it were quite a matter of course ; and a matter of course it must have been, or the Ogre would certainly have resisted ; instead of which, he purred, and seemed very much at his ease.

“How very queer ! I don’t like it at all ; it sets my teeth on edge,” whispered Larkspur ; but Tuflongbo, who was delighted at what he saw, prayed of him to hush, and not draw attention on themselves.

A little oil would have greatly facilitated the removal of Clickaclop’s head, but such a useful expedient was unknown to the Ogress, who laboriously turned and twisted it round, creaking and squealing like a rusty hinge, until at last she got it off, and opening a secret cupboard, put it up on the top shelf with the utmost care. She then proceeded to screw off the head on the right shoulder, and disposed of that also in the cupboard ; and finally she screwed off the central head, which had worn the cap, and, being released from all three, the Ogre threw himself down on his bed, and was asleep in an instant.

The Ogress appeared quite fatigued with her dutiful exertions, and, to refresh herself after them, she lifted the cap from the hook where she had hung it, and spent an hour or more in admiring her new feathers, and trying how they would suit her style of beauty. All this was very ruffling and distasteful to the feelings of the Adventurers, but they endured the indignities to which they were subjected with exemplary patience, so that they found themselves no worse when she again hung them upon the wall, with a promise that she would transfer them to her own dress-cap on the morrow.

She then deliberately screwed off her own head, and after ranging it on the cupboard shelf beside the Ogre’s

three, locked the door, and then lay down on her bed and fell asleep also.

Being now comparatively safe and unguarded, the Adventurers began to talk matters over, sinking their voices to the lowest and most cautious of whispers, lest they should be overheard by the slumbering pair.

"I wonder why they take off their heads?" murmured Larkspur, overflowing with praise-worthy curiosity.

"Probably that they may not be troubled with bad dreams," suggested Tuflongbo.

"Most likely. Yet Clickaclop does not seem a savage fellow, nor his wife either."

"By no means—kind and fatherly, on the contrary. I have a proposition to make. Suppose we trust him, and stay here a little while? We may have a chance of being rejoined by our missing comrades if we linger in this neighbourhood, such as we should lose, did we travel farther away from the scene of our dismal separation. Alas! Larkspur, my heart yearns to behold their woc-begone faces once more, and it aches with anxiety for the evils that must befall them, left without a Leader! Oh, Canary! persevere and be cheerful till we meet! Oh, Chamomile! let not energy fail in this great adversity! Oh, Larch! be audacious to the bounds of extravagance! Oh, Mustard! heed not your calamities! And oh, Gooseberry! live in hope of reunion with Tuflongbo, until your virtuous expectations are crowned with success!" And here the great Adventurer broke down, overcome with his tender feelings and painful fears.

Larkspur joined in his Leader's natural explosion of sorrow, but presently recovering himself, he endea-

voured to impart a little balm of comfort where it was so much needed.

“Most excellent Tuflongbo!” cried he; “let me beseech you not to give way to grief. Clickaclop, no doubt, takes a walk every day, and, perhaps, by degrees, he will pick up all our lost companions, and bring them here, as he brought us, for feathers in his cap. Once thus reunited, we will make joint efforts to escape; and that will not be very difficult, if the Ogre and Ogress lock up their heads in the cupboard every night.”

Tuflongbo now calmed himself and looked his troubles steadily in the face, until, at length, the healthy elasticity of his mind recovered its spring, and he was enabled to make light of them.

“After all,” said he, cheerfully, “we have but found that of which we set out in honest search—adventures amongst Ogres! Too much success would have been bad for us at the beginning; eh, Larkspur, what say you?”

“I say, that whatever is, is best!” replied Larkspur. “But, Tuflongbo, shouldn’t you like to know what the heads are doing up on their cupboard shelf? I should. Let us put off our emotions and meditations till we have nothing else to amuse us, and get a little further insight into the private life of Clickaclop and his Ogress.”

The Leader honourably thanked his light-hearted follower for reminding him of his duty, and, peering inquisitively about the vast hall, he perceived that the Ogress had laid the key of the cupboard on the window-ledge. To discover it and to possess himself of it was but the work of a moment; and with a like promptitude of execution he put it in the lock, turned it round, and

very stealthily opened the door. Larkspur then, with his customary agility, sprang up on the top shelf, and the next instant Tuflongbo was beside him.

And what were those marvellous heads doing in their elegant retirement ?

They were doing nothing particular. All their mouths were wide open, certainly, and all their noses—and there were *twelve* of the Ogre's and *four* of his wife's—were snoring as loud as they could snore in a most inharmonious concert, which suggested another reason for their nocturnal removal ; possibly they were taken off because the abominable noise of them was found to have a tendency to keep their owners awake. But this is merely speculative. Larkspur mentioned it, remembering that the practice had been abolished among Fairykins as one wholly subversive of domestic peace ; but Tuflongbo was inclined to maintain his first view, that the heads were taken off for the prevention of bad dreams, and perhaps his idea may be found to rest on a firmer basis than that of his sprightly companion.

Larkspur could not help laughing at the ridiculously helpless aspect of the features that looked formidable enough when fixed on their rightful shoulders ; but his Leader thought the spectacle a most melancholy one, and though he made a sketch of it as a duty, he was in haste to quit the concert, and lock up the musical-box ; for he had a fine ear, and a fastidious taste, which endured tortures so long as it continued open. At his desire, therefore, it was closed, and the key being restored to its former place on the window-ledge, the two Adventurers stowed themselves once more in the band of the Ogre's cap, and, feeling happily assured that their lives were, for the present, in no peril, they broke a crust to-

gether, thought of their scattered comrades, of their fathers and mothers safe and sound at home, and then with quiet minds committed themselves to several hours of placid and needful rest.

When they awoke in the morning the Ogress was up, with her head on all right and tight; but Clickaclop still slumbered on his pillow, and his three heads showed themselves just on the brink of twelve portentous yawns within the open cupboard. The yawns gradually expanded, stretch beyond stretch, until it seemed inevitable that a hair's breadth more must crack their cheeks; but they stopped short on the verge of the catastrophe, and then all the eyes winked and blinked, opened and stared. The Ogre rolled himself off his bed, sat up in his chair, and intimated to his obedient wife that it was time to put his heads on. She immediately quitted the work she had in hand, took them down one after the other, and fitted them on tenderly; and then Clickaclop shook himself and felt ready for his breakfast.

Before going out to seek it, however, he requested to be shown the feathers he had brought home in his cap last night, and the Ogress reached them down from the hook on the wall with an air of the greatest complaisance. The Adventurers strove to be very calm while Clickaclop examined them, and extricated them from the band of the cap which he wanted to wear; but their hearts beat very fast indeed, and Tuflongbo's Chameleon suit lost much of its vivid colour as he was laid helpless in the Ogress's hand. Larkspur soon joined him there in a similar frame of despondency, but finding, at length, that no harm was intended them, their nerves recovered the shock, and they looked bright again, which pleased the amiable eyes of the Ogre's wife.

“If you can find me a few more such dainty trimmings, Clickaclop, I shall be delighted,” said she, dangling the doleful captives in a ray of sunshine, to enhance the splendour of their brilliant hues.

“I will do my utmost to gratify my fair Buzbuz,” was the Ogre’s gallant reply. And then he set forth to seek his breakfast, fresh, hungry, and vigorous as a hunter.

As soon as Clickaclop was gone, his faithful wife began to set the castle in order from one end to the other; but wherever she went, she carried the Adventurers with her, and this gave them great opportunities for making notes on the domestic arrangements of this singular family of Ogres. The castle was a very grand place indeed, containing innumerable chambers filled with gold and silver, and beautiful suits of armour; but the most interesting scene of all was the private parlour where Buzbuz kept her caps that she was tired of or had worn out.

When she brought Tuflongbo and Larkspur into this elegant retreat, she laid them on her pin-cushion, which was as big as a moderate-sized feather-bed, and gazed leisurely round upon her caps, which hung against the wall in every degree of limpness and faded antiquity; no doubt they had been gay when they were new, but now they were deplorable old rubbish, and her delight at receiving fresh feathers from Clickaclop to decorate another was very natural.

She was in no haste to make the cap, however, and before it was accomplished to her satisfaction, the Adventurers had been put in and pulled out, and arranged and rearranged a score of times at least; but when it began to darken towards night, she was obliged to

make up her mind how she would wear them, and finally they were pinned like two bows to the cap-crown, their knapsacks and walking-sticks being tastefully disposed crosswise over the centre of each. Buzbuz was humming a tune as she performed her millinery task, or she might have heard the groans of her helpless victims, wrung from the depths of their aggrieved feelings.

"I cannot imagine anything much more humiliating than this!" sighed Larkspur, ready to weep. "And oh! Tuflongbo, there is such a sharp black pin running into me somewhere!"

"Bear it, my friend, bear it!" gasped the Leader; "it is better to make gay the company cap of a Buzbuz than to make a last journey down the red lane of a Gulmalog. Take my word for it, no misfortune is so bad but that philosophy may console us with the certainty of there being a worse, which we are not called on to suffer. Even now my heart feels a more acute pang for my missing comrades than for myself. Where are they? where are they?"

"Lucky not to be here, anyhow!" murmured Larkspur, wriggling himself free from the torture of the pin.

Tuflongbo made no answer, but gave his mind to making the best of his misery, when Buzbuz airily placed her new cap on her head, and went down from her private parlour into the great hall to wait her lord's return. The Adventurers could just see each other over the top of it, and that was all; but their position was by no means a bad look-out for what might happen next, and you may be sure they kept their wits alert and their eyes open when the hour for Clickaclop's arrival drew near. The Leader could hear his heart

beat in the agony of his expectations, and when, at last, the earth began to shake under the Ogre's approaching footsteps, it leaped into his throat and almost choked him—not quite, for he had yet to live, to grow old, and to go through a world of marvellous adventures!

CHAPTER XX.

CLICKACLOP COMES HOME WITH MORE FEATHERS IN HIS CAP.

THREE loud blasts through the key-hole announced that Clickaclop was there. Then the gates rolled wide open, and the Ogre entered, in the most provoking good-humour, wagging all his three heads with lively exultation.

“Welcome, my brave Clickaclop! Have you brought me any more of the frisky little feathers?” cried Buz-buz; and immediately from the peak of the Ogre's cap resounded a strangled “Bow-wow-wow-ow-ow!” which Tuflongbo recognised with surprise as the voice of Snub, dog to Chickweed the Wiseacre.

“Behold what I have brought you, my treasure!” replied Clickaclop, and held his heads still that she might admire his captives.

“Oh, how glorious grand!” shrieked she, and clasped her hands in ecstasy at the lovely view.

Tuflongbo anxiously craned forward his head to look also, and with mingled feelings of joy and woe, he recognised in the fringe that ornamented the Ogre's cap-brim his five lost followers, Larch, Mustard, Chamo-

mile, Gooseberry, and Canary, hanging, heads downwards, in the most ignominious fashion. Perched on the peak in the manner of a crest was Snub, barking vociferously, while his poor master clung to his stump of a tail and drifted out on the breeze behind in the most abject distress.

The Leader's first kindly thought was to sound three notes on his whistle, and at the familiar tune a thrill of hope was seen to twinkle through his followers from top to toe, while the fringe on the Ogre's cap vibrated as if they were clapping their hands. Snub also knew the sounds, and stopped short in the midst of a bark to discover the whereabouts of his dear master's friend; immediately he saw him, he made one gallant spring, and hauling Chickweed through the air behind him, leapt from his post on Clickaclop's head to Buzbuz's fine aquiline nose, and after struggling there for a moment to gain his balance, scrambled up on her cap, and lay down by Tuflongbo, overwhelmed with tenderest emotion, and licked his hands and his face—for he was not a Court-dog, and had never learned etiquette.

Tuflongbo welcomed his caresses with gladness, and Larkspur reached up a hand to pat him too, and there was such a commotion altogether on the top of Buzbuz's cap that she took it off, saying it made her head ache, and spent the rest of the evening without one. Clickaclop also laid his down by his wife's, and thus the Adventurers were once more reunited, with the addition of Chickweed and Snub to their company. It behoved them, however, to be cautious how they expressed their satisfaction, lest they should affront their immense captors; and Snub was entreated to moderate the expres-

sion of his natural indignation, for fear mischief should come of it. So his noisy "bow-wow" sank into a low growl, and soon, to everybody's relief, he fell into a snappish dream; from which he did not awake until Buzbuz began to screw off her husband's heads at bedtime—a proceeding which struck him literally dumb with horror and surprise.

Such of the Adventurers as had not before witnessed this operation were much amused thereby, and some of them remarked that it was an excellent way for abolishing curtain-lectures, and desired Tuflongbo to make a note of it; which he did on the same page with the previous speculations that had arisen out of the subject. He also registered in his journal the happy event of the return of his followers, and, in his sketch-book, he made a spirited drawing of Clickaclop as he appeared when he came home with feathers in his cap—a drawing which afterwards excited much wonder and admiration in the art-circles of Sheneland, and was placed ultimately in Queen Osmunda's royal portfolio, with other original designs by great masters.

Clickaclop and Buzbuz acted precisely as they had done the night before, and as soon as their heads were safely locked up in the cupboard, and their bodies were gone to sleep, the Adventurers felt at their ease, and Tuflongbo proposed that they should begin by setting each other at liberty. This was soon accomplished, and after stretching their cramped limbs and shaking themselves straight in their clothes, they sat down in a ring on the table, and held a solemn talk over their situation, which they wound up by a brief recital of their respective calamities since they were fished for by the dreadful Ogre Gulmalog in his odious dungeon, and then sepa-

rately turned adrift in the dark night, on its being discovered that they were too good to be eaten.

“Beloved brothers in adventure!” said the Leader, opening the council, with a voice of emotion, as soon as silence was established in the circle; “my friends and faithful followers, behold us again reunited after our grievous and anxious dispersion! Words are too weak to express my sentiments on this sublime event, therefore suffer me to leave them to your own warm imaginations, and let us celebrate it by relating in as few phrases as are consistent, the persecutions that befell each of us while we were divided. Mustard, you were the first to be caught by the magic hook of the ferocious Gulmalog—to you, therefore, belongs the precedence. Stand up and speak, but be not long-winded!” So the reckless Mustard stood up, shook his yellow locks as if shaking care from him, and delivered himself as follows:—

“My noble Captain and dear friends, when I disappeared through the treacherous trap before your woe-ful eyes, I did not mind except for the poignant sorrow that I left in your kind hearts. The hideous Ogre did nothing but laugh while he exultingly promised himself a dainty supper on your humble comrade’s bones; but as soon as he attempted to bite me, I returned the compliment, with interest, and in a towering rage he spat me out of his mouth—in what direction I was too confused to observe. Were it not that modesty forbids, I should wish to add that an invisible voice declared me *too good to be eaten*—but I will pass that over. Fancy plays strange tricks with us sometimes, and the shock certainly reduced me to a state of insensibility, from which I did not recover until I found myself airily elevated to the band of Clickaclop’s cap. The wind and

the motion combined restored me to my faculties, and after a long day of distress, I was brought hither in company with my worthy friends, as you already know; and that is all I have to tell."

The Leader next called upon Chamomile for his story, and the energetic little Fairykin immediately stood forth.

"I never despair under the gloomiest circumstances," said he; "and when Gulmalog proposed to appease his appetite by devouring me without even the ceremony of salt, I implored him, for his own credit's sake, to reflect on the enormity of what he was going to do, and he admitted me to a parley. I then convinced him that from the adversity I had always suffered, I should prove an exceedingly bitter morsel to whomsoever I might furnish a meal; an unseen voice also pleaded in my favour a *goodness* to which I will only casually allude, and, to my thankful astonishment, the cruel Ogre rose from his seat in a passion, opened a little window in the wall, and flung me out. Cold, hungry, and athirst, I wandered to and fro the desert plain until Clickaclop happened to pass by that way; he immediately picked me up, and stuck me beside the pungent Mustard for a feather in his cap."

Gooseberry was next invited to tell his tale, and rising on tiptoe, he looked about for applause, received it, and began. "Honoured Tufsongbo! You know my disposition; you know that I live in a state of calm expectancy, and that whatever happens can therefore never come amiss to me. When Gulmalog hauled me out of his treacherous dungeon, I merely composed myself and looked for something turning up worthy of attention; but after growling over me for a minute or two, the

Ogre tossed me like a pancake, caught me again, and then threw me out of his parlour window uninjured. *This* I had *not* anticipated, which proves the truth of that great axiom of philosophers—‘There is nothing certain but the unforeseen.’ I also received mysterious testimony to my hidden virtues, but this was no more than I had a right to expect, and it in no wise influenced my spirits. I scrambled to my feet, and wandered away dejected in search of my Leader and my friends, until Clickaclop overtook and captured me. The rest you know.”

Larch was now bidden to speak, and he spoke as follows, with the audacious breadth of metaphor peculiar to his character:—

“When I left you, most noble Tuflongbo, I threatened to pull Gulmalog’s nose, and I pulled it ; I became a wasp to him, a mosquito, a hornet, a very swarm of gnats, until he went down on his knees to me and besought my excellence to go away ; and having wreaked a just vengeance on his hideous countenance, I gave him a final sting and departed. After flying leagues in pursuit of my scattered comrades, in an evil hour Clickaclop caught me and brought me hither to grace his short-lived triumph, as all of you have seen.”

It was Canary’s turn to speak next, and he gave his narrative with singular modesty and effect. “My gallant Captain,” said the cheerful little Fairykin, “before Gulmalog closed the trap after I was taken, I began to sing, and sang with such persevering sweetness that his hard heart was touched, and at a word from an unseen advocate he let me go. I had a weary day and night of loneliness, but at last Clickaclop saw me and added me to his borrowed plumes ; for which I thank him, since

my capture has ended in restoring me to the society of my Leader and my friends."

Larkspur was then called on, and explained himself in glowing language. "Grand Tuflongbo!" were his words, "it was not permitted me to rescue you in the original and expansive style I promised when dragged out of your presence by the magic hook; for the instant Gulmalog got me into his parlour, he seized an enormous battledore, and using me for a shuttlecock, we played a capital game together. The silly fellow meant it for mischief, but any one who knows my lightness and elasticity will be sure I found it fun, and even regretted when it was over; but once, flying higher than usual, I went right out at the centre of the roof and caught hold of the first object that presented itself to steady my descent. This first object happened to be the peak of Clickaclop's cap, and finding so many interesting novelties to observe as the Ogre stumbled along, I remained there for some time undiscovered; but attempting presently to escape, he felt me, and stuck me securely in the band, where I floated in great anguish of mind until I heard your melodious whistle. Oh, my Captain, then my heart gave a great bound, and I espied you lurking amongst the reeds. From that moment I was happy. Soon you joined me in my irksome captivity, and we exchanged consolations until we arrived at the wonderful castle, where we are all once more reunited in a loving band of brother Adventurers."

It now only remained to inquire of Chickweed, whose black gown was in ribbons, how he and Snub came to be wandering so far from home and in so unprotected a condition—though belonging to the venerable society of Wiseacres—as to have fallen into the clutch of an Ogre.

With visible reluctance the dejected wight entered into a hesitating account of himself, but encouraged by the great sympathy of Tuflongbo and his companions, his spirits gradually revived, and he was able to speak freely.

“When you departed on your adventures, magnanimous Tuflongbo,” said he, “I for a brief space forgot my troubles in an old crow’s nest, whither the kind-hearted Wild Sorrel had conveyed me. But when I had made myself master of the principles of its construction, and the interest of it ceased, my sorrow and regret returned on me poignantly. I passed an exceedingly bad night. The following day it was my painful duty to give a lecture on chronology to the students of the highest form, and I muddled my dates in the most excruciating style. Rudbeakia justly reprimanded me, and not only that, but told me that it was my week to superintend the classes that did sums and problems. I will not wring your kind hearts by going into particulars—suffice it to say, that I ordered one of my pupils to divide two millions three thousand one hundred and nothing into the cube root of seventeen and a half decimal fractions of three farthings a-piece; and that I asked another what would be the cost of fifty-two lambs’ tails if a Wiseacre’s tongue wagged foolishly three hundred and sixty-five times in the year? This last proposition was considered as disrespectful to the honourable society, and a deputation was sent, begging me to take my name off the books forthwith. I but too joyfully complied. My aged guardian threw his wig into the fire in sheer despair of my ever coming to honour; and Snub and I ran away in the night to escape his grievous reproaches, leaving our characters to the care of that witty fellow, Wild

Sorrel, who, I know, will speak up for us with boldness and courage. We had been out only two days enjoying our liberty extravagantly, when Clickaclop came by and found us Beetle-hunting. 'Two more feathers for my Buzbuz!' cried he, and perched us on the peak of his cap. I can never sufficiently extol the courage of my faithful Snub, who supported me under these trying circumstances, and brought me safely through them: but for the beautiful balance he maintained in our perilous exaltation, I must inevitably have fallen to the ground, and have been dashed in pieces twenty times. We will never part as long as we live! Snub, my friend, where are you?"

Ay, where was Snub? where was he? Words almost fail me to tell where he was, his conduct had been so monstrous! *He was under the table worrying Buzbus's dress-cap to tatters!* And he had worried it until she would not have known it again—no, not *even* in her *spectacles!* He had tried his teeth on Clickaclop's, too, but that was of tougher material, and was not much the worse; but when his master, who had been extolling his virtue, and the band of Adventurers understood the terrible extent of his misbehaviour, they were almost overwhelmed with dismay. It was next to impossible that Buzbuz could forgive the tragical ending of her sweet new cap, and nothing was apparently left to them but to make a hurried escape from the scene of its destruction ere she awoke!

CHAPTER XXI.

DESPERATE CRISIS IN CLICKACLOP'S CASTLE.

"DEAR Chickweed, oblige me by at once laying an embargo on Snub!" cried the Leader, instantly confronting with firmness the new dangers that threatened himself and his followers.

So Snub was snatched from his prey, and plunged into his master's pocket, with only his nose out for air; and when he rebelliously struggled to get his liberty, Chickweed with his elbow squeezed him as if he were bagpipes, until his spirits fell, and he attained to a repentant frame of mind. It was of no use endeavouring to impress on him the mischief he had done, for though an intelligent dog with regard to things on two legs or four, he had no sense whatever of the nature of dress-caps, unless, indeed, he cherished a secret animosity against all caps by reason of the misery a black one had inflicted on his beloved master.

Tufiongbo commenced operations by calling on all his band to unlock the great gates of the castle by blowing in a united blast through the keyhole, as they had seen Clickaclop do; but though they blew with the heartiest good-will, the gates stirred not an inch! They then tried using the spikes of their staves to force them open, but to no purpose whatever.

While thus engaged, hot and eager to effect their escape, they heard a terrible noise without, and all at once their came a loud knock, as of another Ogre knocking with his club! At this crisis, Tufiongbo's

genius, almost dormant until now, suddenly fired up; he felt what must be *said*, and he *said* it; he saw what must be *done*, and he *did* it, without fear and without hesitation, proving himself master of the emergency on the instant.

"This knocking on the gates is the summons of an enemy!" said he. "No friend knocks so *loud*, so *long*, or so *late*—but our escape has, for the present, become impossible. We will, therefore, form an alliance, offensive and defensive, with Clickaclop and his amiable Ogress, and wake them up!"

"But how about Buzbuz, and her dress-cap?" whispered Chickweed, despondently.

"I shall persuade her that she is too young to wear one," replied Tuflongbo, and turned to more serious matters.

At this conjuncture the knocking was repeated very imperatively, and Clickaclop began to stir uneasily on his bed; Buzbuz moved also; and Tuflongbo sprang to the cupboard where all the heads were beginning to open their eyes in wonder and alarm, and besought them to come down and be screwed on without loss of time. At this urgent and unusual entreaty, they winked in a confused manner, till Buzbuz hastily snatched hers and fixed it in its place, after which she assisted Clickaclop, who was clumsily striving to help himself; so that at the third summons they were ready and collected, and beginning to gather their wits about them. Tuflongbo now breathed freely, and having formed his little band into a compact body behind the left wing of the gates, he admonished Chickweed to suppress Snub, lest he should prematurely burst out and spoil all; and waited with a mind calm, cool, and courageous, for the

savage assailant who might every instant be expected to break his way in.

"Open the door!" growled a big voice through a chink; but the besieged stood firm to their posts, and declined.

"Have ready your staves!" said Tuflongbo, passing the word of command to his followers, who instantly obeyed.

There then ensued a pause of dead silence, during which you might have heard a pin drop. It was as if the enemy were taking counsel with himself how next to proceed, and as if Clickaclop and Buzbuz were endeavouring to overhear his thoughts. The pair looked exceedingly pale and alarmed, and the Leader of the Adventurers strove, by many pantomimic gestures of valour and assurance, to dissipate their tremor, but all in vain; immense as they were in height and in girth, they did not seem to have the courage of mice, and now they were as nervous and fidgety as mice in a trap.

"Open the door!" again growled the big voice through the chink, and again the besieged maintained a silent defiance.

The patience of the enemy now appeared to be well-nigh exhausted, and retiring a few paces off, he drove up against the gates with all his mighty bulk, and tried to burst them open; but they held fast, being sound oak and good iron.

A howl of vexation betrayed the foe's disappointment, and Buzbuz, on hearing it, whispered fearfully under her breath, "Oh! patter, patter, patter, what shall we do? Tricks, trumps, and heeltaps, here's *Squint-askew!*"

Clickaclop pressed her hand, and would have spoken

kind words of comfort had he been able, but his teeth chattered so exceedingly he could not get one out. The Ogress was not yet totally overcome, but tears as large as pennies rolled down her plump cheeks, and when the foe rushed exasperated on the gates a second time, she clasped her fingers, and made ready to take refuge in a fit of hysterics in case of the worst.

"Oh, Click, my Clickaclop, he's at the door! Don't you hear his howlings? Don't you hear his roar?" gasped she, in accents of terror. It would have been strange, indeed, had not Clickaclop heard them, for they made the welkin ring.

Squintaskew was evidently ignorant of the secret of the lock; for *seven* times did he bodily hurl his battering-ram against the gates, and *seven* times did he fail to make any impression on them. The Adventurers were now getting into the spirit of the assault, and really beginning to enjoy it; when during one fatally incautious moment, Snub got more than his nose out of Chickweed's pocket, and, being next the keyhole, barked through it with such vehemence that the doors sprang wide open, and Squintaskew, who happened at the identical instant to be driving up full tilt against them, fell headlong with an awful crash across the floor of the castle hall! Clickaclop and Buzbuz broke forth into shrieks of fear; but, quick as thought, Tuflongbo manœuvred his followers over the prostrate foe, and while he was dizzied and confused with his catastrophe, made him a secure prisoner, linking his ankles to the columns of the gates and his wrists to the table-legs. Recalled to a sense of propriety, Buzbuz lent her aid, and Clickaclop did his little best, but without Tuflongbo and his gallant companions *all* would have been *lost*!

Up to the moment of this crisis, scarcely a word had been spoken amongst the Adventurers ; but the Leader now gave them permission to cheer, which they did most triumphantly. Squintaskew writhed under the chorus, the more especially because they beat time to it, first with a tattoo, and then with a game of single-stick on his humiliated head ; and being at last irritated beyond endurance, he threw it up, and made such a sour grimace, that all the milk in the neighbourhood cracked ! Tuflongbo eyed him with natural curiosity, and drew his portrait, which was pronounced by critics so ugly and fearsome, that although it hangs in the National Gallery of Sheneland, it is felt judicious to have a veil before it, for fear of the Court Elves being shocked.

Their enemy being now safe, Clickaclop and Buzbuz thought of taking off their heads again, and finishing their interrupted night's rest, but Tuflongbo would not hear of such a dull proceeding, and reminded them politely of the duties of hospitality.

"We must leave you at daybreak," said he, "and we are *hungry* !"

At that word the heart of Buzbuz was softened, and she immediately declared that she would make them a noble feast.

It was no sooner said than done, and the table smoked with buttered eggs, toast, and bacon ; with partridge pie, roast pig, and damson tarts ; with omelets, all sweet and savoury, and hasty-pudding, with plenty of delicious treacle. The Adventurers had not fared so well since they left home, and they enjoyed themselves exceedingly ; to some of them the dainties receiving a new flavour from the agonised contortions of Squintaskew,

who smelt the good things, but was not invited to share them. Tuflongbo, however, checked their mirth, reminding them that the brave could afford to be generous, and then, by way of setting a magnanimous example, he handed the conquered Ogre an enormous bowl of hot plum-porridge, which stood smoking under his nose all through breakfast. This being any the better for it, because his hands were linked to the legs of the table, and he could not get to himself. Snub showed him how to eat it, but the Ogre refused to profit by the lesson; and the Ogre, therefore, stowed the plum-porridge away in his pocket, with the remark that it was a pity it should be cold and be wasted.

By this time the travellers were satisfied, and at the suggestion of the grateful Larkspur they danced a beautiful jig on the table to gratify Buzbuz, who laughed exceedingly—laughed, indeed, until she was obliged to hold her sides; but all at once her eyes fell on the fragments of her ruined cap, which Snub was touseling by way of relish after his breakfast. She then checked her mirth with a long-drawn sob, and having rescued the beautiful remains, pulled a long face as a preparation for tears; but the gallant Tuflongbo stayed the flood by chucking her airily under the chin, and asking why she should conceal her lovely florid locks, which must be the admiration of all beholders, under a cap fit only for her grandmother. The delicate compliment implied by his inquiry went straight to her susceptible heart, and from that day forward she cultivated curls instead of caps, which made her look at least ten years younger.

This anxious difficulty being thus disposed of, Tuf-longbo and his companions prepared to leave the castle,

and Clickaclop shook hands all round with great gratitude between two drowsy nods. He was a very sleepy-headed fellow, a vegetarian, and a member of the Ogres' peace society, but well-meaning and respectable, though he would never put himself out of the way for anybody—not even for people who had done him incalculable services, such as he could never have accomplished for himself. But Buzbuz was of a more noble character; and by way of testifying her sense of the benefit the Adventurers had conferred upon her and her slumberous spouse, she offered to lend them her favourite palfrey, Heehaw, to carry them one stage on their journey.

The Leader expressed his thanks and cordial acceptance of her civility, and Heehaw being brought out in front of the castle gates, the large saddle of the Ogress was placed on his back, and the Adventurers forthwith mounted; Larkspur seating himself comfortably between his ears, and Chickweed and Snub being accommodated with places looking towards his tail. Tuflongbo had a conspicuous position on the crutch, and the rest of his followers grouped themselves behind him as conveniently as they could.

All was now ready to start, but first the Leader asked of Buzbuz, "What are you going to do with that piece of lumber?" pointing to the still prostrate Squintaskew. Buzbuz looked puzzled, and said she did not know.

"Shall I get rid of him for you?" suggested Tuflongbo.

"Oh, if you would!" replied she, delighted.

"Sever his bonds, then, and we will give him his order to march!" So the Ogress very gingerly loosed Squintaskew's ankles from the door-posts and his wrists

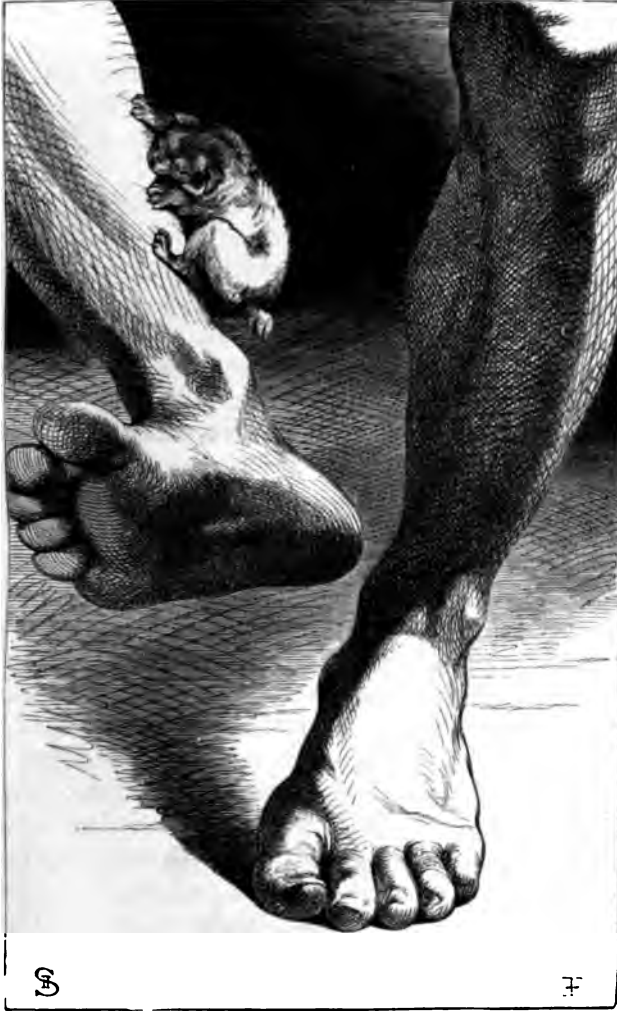
from the table-legs, and retired to a safe distance to see what would happen next.

"Get up, you Squintaskew!" then cried the Captain of the Adventurers, "and go about your business!"

The frightful Ogre, whose eyes glared every way at once, heaved himself to his feet like an immense sack, and stood, sulky and sullen, at liberty. Tuflongbo gave him one more look, and as he did not stir, but began to utter insolent airs of defiance, the Leader sternly rebuked him, saying, "Obey, do your duty!" when Snub, who had been waiting for the word, leapt down from his perch, seized Heehaw's tail, and hurried, worried, scurried, and marked round the legs of Squintaskew with a flourish, that he was glad to clap on his seven-leagued boots, and rush howling over the plain like a whirlwind until he was out of sight, and Snub was a mere dancing speck in the distance!

The Adventurers waited for his return, and as soon as he was comfortably reinstated at his master's feet, Heehaw sounded the trumpet, and marched off amidst a chorus of farewells. Buzbuz wept at losing the merry company; but it was a fine morning, the sun was shining, and the country was beautiful, so that the spirits of the travellers were greatly exhilarated, and they looked forward to new adventures with eager desire. As they journeyed in this luxurious manner on the broad back of Heehaw, there was no call for exertion on their own parts; therefore Canary was invited to beguile the way with a song, in the chorus of which his comrades joined lustily.

"The sun is on the hill-top,
The dew is on the thorn,
Good-bye to Clickaclop,
Welcome, merry morn!



Snub quickens the movements of the Ogre Squintaskew. P. 118



Blow a kiss to Buzbuz,
Send a Zephyr with it,
She was kind to all of us,
And she will forgive it!
Here we go merrily, merrily,
Here we go cheerily, cheerily,
Eight of us, and Snub makes nine!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HOSPITABLE AND COURTEOUS GRIFFINS.

WHEN the Adventurers were tired of singing, they entered into conversation, and talked a great deal of Philosophy; for it is wonderful how much more readily Philosophy adapts itself to colloquial than to practical purposes. Heehaw was an excellent and patient beast for some time; but when he felt that he had gone far enough, he gave the travellers a gentle hint of his opinion by suddenly lying down and rolling over in the dust; then, kicking up his heels and roaring abominably, he scampered back to his stable like a wind broke loose, while each member of the gallant band lay sprawling on the ground. They were dismounted no less by their hobby Philosophy than by the ungracious Heehaw, for they rose with a considerable display of temper, and it was several moments before Tuflongbo's voice succeeded in calming their wrath and restoring discipline.

"Heehaw has an unmannerly way of expressing his wishes, it is true," said he; "but let us not emulate his lack of polish. Come, my friends, fall into line, and

march forward! Save your breath to cool your next bowl of porridge. That was excellent stuff Buzbuz made for us this morning. *Now, fall in! Attention!—silence in the ranks!*” And the habit of obedience prevailing over a natural desire to pursue and chastise the recreant palfrey, the Adventurers closed up two and two again, and journeyed on their Captain stepping out alone in the van.

It was about noon when the haw turned them adrift, and they were approaching the borders of a vast forest, that appeared pathless in gloom. Whether should they enter it or skirt it became now a paramount consideration, and Tuflongbo called a council to assist him in his decision. The Captain and his band formed a circle on a green bank, and were already deep in the debate, when they became aware of two **Griffins drawing near, with fiery tails, curled at the tips. They were apparently taking a constitutional, for they sauntered leisurely along arm-in-arm, talking, as they sauntered, in the fashionable drawl. They wore horn spectacles in the highest mode; but one defect they had, and that a great one—they prevented the Griffins seeing any object unless it were presented close under their noses; and the consequence was, that they did not detect the presence of the travellers upon their territory until they stumbled into the midst of the council that was sitting on the green bank.**

“What’s the matter, now? Who, pray, are you?” demanded the taller of the two strangers, in the utmost amazement.

“We are the Queen of Sheneland’s Adventurers,” replied the Leader, with becoming dignity.

“My respects to her Majesty, and I hope she enjoys

good health. I have a great respect for her, and shall be proud if her gallant subjects will honour me at supper. Allow me to present my friend Rigituft. My name is Gantlett”

“Your courtesy charms me!” cried Tuflongbo. “We are honoured in accepting your noble hospitality!” And off they all went, Rigituft and Gantlett leading the way into the forest, with their fiery tails curled high in the air to act as torches, an ingenious contrivance, which elicited great applause from the travellers.

As they advanced into the wood, it became less dense than it had appeared at first sight, and broke away here and there into beautiful glades and long mysterious vistas of the most alluring aspect. Several of these the Adventurers passed by unexplored, until, at length, they came to a circular palace of crystal, at the doorway of which waited a number of slaves. As Gantlett and Rigituft appeared, they all performed kootoo in the most abject manner, and then waited in kneeling positions for the commands of their masters.

“Prepare a feast!” cried Rigituft, and instantly the slaves vanished like one shadow, swift, noiseless, obedient.

The gates of the splendid dwelling then slowly opened to the sound of sweetest music, and as Tuflongbo entered the hall with his followers, a dazzling lustre shone on their coats of chameleon cloth; and instead of being travel-stained and weary, they appeared all over of the loveliest and most resplendent hues. The pillars of the crystal hall were of lapis-luzuli and amber, the floor was mosaicked in gems, and the roof rose in a lofty dome, white and glittering as frosted silver. The whole palace was radiant and glorious as that of Queen Osmunda on

the morning of her coronation, save that it lacked the presence of the beviies of bright Elves who smiled on that enchanting scene. And even *they* were not wanting long; for, as the slaves brought in the various dishes for the feast, there appeared also six exquisite Sprites, clad in dew-sparkling gossamer, and bearing wild-rose cups full of rain for the *gentlemen* to wash their hands! Tuflongbo, Chickweed, and the band felt exceedingly dismayed; they had been brought up as gentlemen, and it went quite against their feelings to accept menial services from such lowly creatures. The Leader made them an elegant apology, then, relieving them of their burdens, he bade his *waiters* wait on themselves, which they proceeded to do with the greatest confusion. Let it be remembered that since they left their homes after the farewell entertainment, they had seen **no beauties** at all; and this band of sister-sprites **dawned** on their unoccupied hearts and imaginations like a vision of Elfin Court in the wilds.

Tuflongbo had an instant presentiment of what would happen—and it *did* happen. Larkspur, Mustard, Chamomile, Larch, Canary, and Gooseberry immediately fell in love, and did not appear to know for the next quarter of an hour whether they were standing on their heads or their heels! At the end of that time, their ablutions having been performed with extreme haste and awkwardness, they took their seats at the hospitable board—Tuflongbo being placed at the right hand of Rigituft and Chickweed at the left of Gantlett. Behind *them* stood slaves, but behind each of the young Adventurers who had fallen in love stood meekly the fairer of his choice—Pearl behind Larkspur, Puff behind Mustard, Cherry behind Chamomile, Snow-Flake

Larch, Flutter behind Canary, and Fleece behind Gooseberry, an arrangement of mingled pain and delight to their gallant and tender feelings.

“Fall to, my friends, and let us begin to enjoy ourselves!” now cried Gantlett, and instantly everybody was served with delicious soup, which all absorbed with great gusto, until their faces shone, their eyes sparkled, and their spirits were quite exhilarated.

It was during an incautious moment, brought about by this genially expansive mood, that Tuflongbo happened to glance at his opposite entertainer, Gantlett, and to see him grinning from ear to ear in the most triumphant and malicious fashion. His suspicions of a snare were instantly awakened, and he gave a soft, low whistle, intimating to his comrades to be on their guard, but by no means to betray fear. Then, assuming an air of roystering gaiety, he made a feint of flinging himself with all his heart into the pleasures of the hour, and challenged Rigituft to a glass of claret. Rigituft filled his glass to the brim, and tossed it off with an air to the very good health of his friend; then Tuflongbo filled his, and pretended to do likewise, but not a drop passed his lips. With the dexterity of a conjuror he flung the liquor over his shoulder full in the face of the treacherous slave who waited behind him, and put him so much out of countenance that he was obliged to retire precipitately. The Leader then pledged Gantlett in the same manner, and by a few secret words spoken in Faëriese, suggested to Chickweed and the rest to follow his example, which they did—seeming to drink goblet for goblet with their hosts, but pouring all the claret under the table most self-denyingly, for it looked and smelt superb. It was, indeed, the very best tap in the

Griffins' cellar; but they had put a wicked sleeping-powder in it.

The drinking-match was continued all through supper, which lasted three hours, and while Gantlett and Rigituft became every moment redder in the face and rounder in the eyes, Tuflongbo and his brave little band remained as cool as cucumbers. All the Griffins, stupidly bewildered by their own delusions, and puzzled at the non-effect of the claret upon their guests, fell into a doze, then into a snore, and finally fell down in two ungainly bundles on the floor. Then he leapt Tuflongbo, and stamped out the flaming tip of Rigituft's torch-like tail, while Chickweed did the same by Gantlett's, and immediately it appeared that the hospitable and courteous Griffins were neither more nor less than Ogres in disguise.

"We are delivered from our cruel captivity," exclaimed the lovely Elves, in one sweet ringing chorus, and they crowded round Tuflongbo to kiss his hands in their gratitude. He received their expressions of delight with gentle civility, and then consigned each one singly to the care of his people, while he considered what next it would be most expedient to do under these very surprising circumstances.

"We have had proof enough that these Ogres are a treacherous race," said he. "Shall we prosecute our discoveries amongst them, or shall we go elsewhere in search of adventures? Chickweed, my worthy friend, what do you advise?"

"Permit me first to ask how these fair Elves are to be disposed of; it will not be fitting to carry *them* through the hardships that are mere trifles to *us*. Shall we send them home to Elfin Court under the charge of my faithful Snub?"

At this unpractical and unfeeling proposition, a general murmur arose amongst the juniors of the band, and Chickweed was instantly sneered down as a person who knew nothing whatever about delicate matters. He therefore subsided into silence, and examined the structure of Gantlett's smouldering tail, while the rest talked over the present emergency.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CAPTIVE ELVES.

"TELL us, bright Pearl, how it happens that we find you with so many beautiful companions held in durance vile by Rigituft and Gantlett?" said Tuflongbo, desirous of all the useful information he could get.

"We were beguiled hither by the promise of a lovely ball, as you were beguiled by the anticipation of a great feast," was the answer. "It was on a midsummer night that the disguised Ogres met us not far from the Enchanted Bower; and after a little conversation they placed us on magic steeds which flew through the air like the wind, and never stopped nor stayed until we dismounted here. There was a ball, 'tis true, and strange partners who danced us almost to death, but since that dreadful night we have lived in dulness and misery unparalleled. Many victims have been since decoyed hither, and enrolled amongst the Ogres' mobs of slaves; but never before has there been one brave enough to save himself or rescue us, as you have done! The charm of the Griffins to fascinate beholders, lay in

the curled flames of their tail-tips, and now that you have stamped and crushed them out, their power is gone; and when they come to themselves in the morning, they will be no better or stronger than the common Ogres who go undisguised."

A dreadful sound, half groan, half angry roar, here interrupted the fair Pearl's dainty speech, and Chickweed was seen to jump up, shake his fingers vehemently, and to glance with doubtful tremor towards Tuflongbo.

"What are you about now?" cried the Leader, advancing towards him where he stood over the prostrate Gantlett.

"I wanted it for my museum of curiosities," replied he, exhibiting a portion of the Griffin's tail which he had rather unskillfully amputated at the seventh joint. "It burned my fingers—I did not suppose it would retain heat so long."

"You are welcome to it," said Tuflongbo, coolly; "perhaps you had better take off also the tip of Rigituft's, to be presented on our return to the natural history collection of Sheneland—it is not rich in combustible tails, I believe."

"Very poor, on the contrary—that is the finest specimen extant," responded Chickweed, happy in his acquisition, and then he proceeded to operate on Rigituft, as he had already done on the insensible Gantlett, and with equal success.

Meanwhile the six Elves, and the six susceptible Adventurers, had been talking over their own private affairs in tender whispers, so that when Tuflongbo returned to them, he found matters approaching settlement without his assistance. He, however, went

through the form of suggesting that the lovely Sprites should be conveyed to the first station on the boundaries of civilisation, and there committed to the care of the earliest escort that might offer itself, to restore them to their friends and families. At this, each bright face became a cloud, and a mournful silence ensued, which Canary presently broke.

“Great Tuflongbo, high exalted above the reach of Elfin dreams, and loves, and sentiments; noble Tuflongbo, a vowed bachelor for Queen Osmunda’s sake, exercise your sympathy for weaker-minded folks!” cried he, with cheerful enthusiasm. “We are the best friends these lovely Sprites possess; we are their deliverers, their brave admirers, their devoted protectors! Us they approve, us they esteem, us they affectionately love—why then should we be parted any more?”

The Leader looked painfully puzzled, and Chickweed curled up a most sarcastic nose, while the Elves smiled sweetly, and the six sentimental Adventurers anxiously waited their Captain’s reply. Tuflongbo’s position was a difficult one, but a few moments’ reflection enabled him delicately to evade his dilemma.

“Why should you be parted any more?” repeated he, echoing Canary’s buoyant tone. “Why, indeed! We are sure to go into wild woods and forests, where gossamer would come to grief; but then each of you, my soft-hearted lovers, has a spare suit of corduroy in his knapsack, and if the pretty Elves will condescend to wear them, they can accompany our expedition as Amazons, and I do not doubt but they will do deeds of valour to surprise us all.”

O wily Tuflongbo! He knew well enough how the gentle creatures would weep and call him *monster*, and

then give their own practical and prudent minds to a solution of the puzzle of their disposal. They consulted apart for a few moments, and then Puff, being chosen spokeswoman, stood forward, and said eloquently:—

“Far be it from us, Tuflongbo, to embarrass the march of your band: in these seasons, we cannot travel with you, for all of us are liable to faint; gossamer is our proper wear—consequently we leave to stronger-minded Elves. Let us, therefore, be taken under the charge of your followers to the nearest civilised abode, and there placed until you all return home, covered with honour and glory, when we will welcome you back with glee, and make our dear friends happy to their hearts' content.”

A modified applause followed this oration, and Tuflongbo declared that it was impossible to have spoken more wisely under the circumstances than Puff had done. And the matter being thus settled, preparations were made to leave the crystal palace of the Griffins before they recovered their impaired faculties. The Elves having found walking-shoes, and put them on, and warm mantles over their light robes, declared themselves ready to start; and they started accordingly, leaving Gantlett and Rigituft still prostrate on their own floor. It was observed by Tuflongbo in departing, that all the ranks of abject slaves had fled, forsaking their masters in misfortune, as slaves always do; and before day dawned, he and his followers, with their dear encumbrances, were all safe out of the gloomy forest.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TERRIBLE RESULTS OF FLIGHT.

TUFLONGBO and his band, with all their pretty sweetings, were safe out of the gloomy forests, it is true, but a new and immediate danger confronted them the moment they left the shelter of the trees. A host of Giant-Ogres, with shields and spears, were advancing in regular order over the plain, covered with dabs of war-paint, and sounding their terrible battle-cry until the whole air rang with it, and the forest shook again, as if a mighty wind were rising amidst its branches.

The Leader made haste to manœuvre his gallant followers into a circle round the Elves, and then stood on the defensive, regretting exceedingly that his movements were embarrassed by so much lovely gossamer that it was impossible for him to make an assault, as his ardour would otherwise have led him to do.

“The most convenient accident that could happen to us now would be that these tremendous Ogres should elevate their noses in the air and pass us by unseen,” whispered he in the ear of Chickweed. “They are evidently on the war-trail of the Griffins whom we have extinguished; and far be it from me, by any inopportune obtrusiveness, to change their minds.”

“Shall we hide ourselves?” suggested Chickweed.

“By no means—Tuflongbo scorns concealment,” was the instant reply. “Flight and concealment are equally against my principles. What are my people talking about so eagerly? Can unworthy thoughts of retreat have occurred to *them*! Oh! shame! shame!

The great Adventurer stamped with rage and contempt when he found that visions of safety had displaced visions of glory with his fascinated band, and he expressed his sentiments in the most cutting phrases in all his vocabulary.

"Put on mob-caps, ye valiant heroes that talk of flight!" cried he, pointing his finger of scorn at his six trembling followers. "I will lead you into the wood with you, like scared pigeons, white-headed and black-winged, if you do not get out of the wood as fast as you can. I will be amongst you for evermore!"

"Be not so wrath, noble Captain," pleaded Gooseberry. "What can we expect but instant destruction if we remain here? It is the approach of this terrible horde of barlocks that has brought us here. Our old enemies Gulmalog and Squintaskew are amongst them, and what will be our fate *then*?"

"Consider also our beauteous Elves, noble Captain," urged Larkspur. "*We* might go to the attack, and fall or conquer without much care; but what shall we do with *them*—how provide for their safety while we are in danger?"

Tuflongbo could have given utterance to some most ungallant expressions, but he put a restraint on himself and forbore.

"If none but the brave deserve the fair, you will lose your honour, and your pretty sweetings, too," said he, coldly. "Pearl, Puff, Cherry, Snow-flake, Flutter, and Fleece, will never bestow their love upon Fairies of the White-Feather. Get under their mantles *now*, and they will laugh you to scorn by and by. Make haste—the Ogres are almost upon us!"

And so they were; and, as Gooseberry suggested, Gulmalog and Squintaskew marched at the head of the horde, looking most hideously tragical. Up

critical moment, Snub had kept himself modestly in the background ; but the instant he espied his old foe whom he had so ignominiously routed, he sprang forth in spite of Chickweed's remonstrances, and, dashing straight at Squintaskew's protuberant calves, fixed his fangs in them, and there hung like a thirsty leech. Tuflongbo bravely stood his ground, supported by Chickweed alone ; for the moment Snub made his impetuous charge, Larkspur, Larch, Gooseberry, Canary, Mustard, and Chamomile ran away, each bearing off his beautiful bit of gossamer in his recreant arms ! The Leader saw their flight with great disgust, and muttered that he hoped they would not find themselves out of the frying-pan into the fire—which, alas ! they almost immediately did. Hovering in the air was a marvellous Magic Kite, that had been watching for prey all the morning, and now that the Adventurers were without a Captain, it saw a fine opportunity for taking them. Down it swooped in one splendid pounce, and, alighting before their astounded eyes, gave them to understand that if they would tie themselves in bundles on to his tail, which was scarcely heavy enough for steady flight, it would bear them far away from fear of Ogres, and of all other dangers, to a halcyon spot, where they might live happily ever afterwards. In an evil hour they listened to its beguiling, and being slung two and two along its tail of string, they closed their timid eyes, and committed themselves to its beneficent protection. Chuckling all over, and visibly—it could not do so within, because it was only one thickness of silver paper—the Magic Kite rose high into the air, and, after a dozen or so giddy and erratic gyrations, it poised itself for a long flight, and flew straight across by a short cut

over into the desolate and savage regions of Wildwaste! Tuflongbo and Chickweed beheld the catastrophe, and, wringing their hands, exclaimed, "Oh, unhappy wights, unhappy wights! ye know not whither ye are gone!"

Their attention was then called off to their own position, and that of the reckless Snub, who was keeping the entire body of Ogres in his outrageous howlings and barkings. The Snub poked at him with their spears, and skipped from one to the other as he made his repeated attacks, until they were quite out of breath and ready to collapse.

"It is of no use trying to rescue Fairykins prisoners—they are too good for us," growled Gulmalog. "I've had experience of them already. Don't let us waste time here, lest Rigituft and Gantlett effect an escape before we reach their crystal palace."

"You will find Rigituft and Gantlett extinguished!" cried Tuflongbo, unable to resist the triumph of telling the tale of his victory.

"Who extinguished them?" demanded Squintaskew.

"*We* did," replied Chickweed, and exhibited the amputated joints of their combustible tails in proof thereof.

At this announcement the Ogres gave a united whistle of triumph, and lauded the bold Adventurers up to the skies.

"Ask any favour that is in our power to grant, and it is yours!" exclaimed Gulmalog. "Oh, you brave little jewels, you were indeed too good to be eaten—a lucky fate it was that rescued you! But where are all the rest?—there were seven of you."

"Ah! where indeed?" echoed the Leader, in a mournful tone. "Where, indeed? They have un-

faith in a Magic Kite instead of relying on their own courage and their Captain's skill, and it has borne them straight over to Wildwaste."

"Serve 'em right," snarled Squintaskew, who was of a cruel and malignant disposition. "I hope Slink will worry them!"

"Silence, Squintaskew!" interposed the more generous Gulmalog. "The brave Tuflongbo and the eccentric Chickweed have put out our rampant foes, the fiery-tailed Griffins; and by all the laws of courtesy and honour, one good turn surely deserves another. Speak, gallant Fairykins, what grace shall we do you in return for extinguishing Gantlett and Rigituft?"

"Give us a safe pass into the country of your cousins, the Giants, that we may go to the rescue of our misguided comrades," said Tuflongbo; and Chickweed seconded his request.

"That is soon done," answered Gulmalog, and drawing forth his tablets, he wrote thereon certain cabalistic letters which signified—"Let these gentlemen pass in security and honour;" and Tuflongbo having stowed the precious document in his wallet, Snub was bidden to leave his ankular investigations amongst the Ogres and to come away, which he reluctantly did. The two deserted Adventurers then took a sad farewell of their new friends, and went on their sorrowful way towards the savage land of the Giants.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COMBAT OF THE CRUMPLECUES.

TUFLONGBO and Chickweed beguiled their solitary journey, which lasted all days and twelve pitch-black nights, by as cheerful conversation as could be expected in their deplorable circumstances. Wildwaste was at an unexplored region, no amateur traveller ever ventured into its dreadful deserts. It behoved Tuflongbo and Chickweed to keep very busy in preparation for the tremendous dangers and difficulties that might there await them. On the thirteenth day, by a cold change in the atmosphere, they received warning of their approach to savage regions. Both expressed themselves as calm and quite at ease in their feelings, and then, by a most inconveniently narrow defile, they proceeded to work their way into Wildwaste.

At the inner mouth of the Pass they found seated on guard three enormous Giants—Slink, Slouchback, and Lumba, to whom Tuflongbo, bowing with lofty dignity, presented himself as Adventurer to the Queen of Shene-land, and his companion as a late member of the Royal Society of Wiseacres.

"That may be all very true, but what is your business *here*?" demanded the gruff Slink.

"Our business is to recover six Fairykins and their bits of gossamer," replied the great Captain. "Twelve dull days and twelve pitch-black nights ago, a Kite flew over hither with them. We were all in Ogreland together, and they fled before

of Gulmalog and Squintaskew, for whom fortune put it in our power to do a vital service. In return for it Gulmalog gave us this passport, which I have now the honour of presenting to your monstrous worships." And thus speaking, Tuflongbo brought out the leaf of the Ogre's tablets, inscribed as before stated; and the three Giants having narrowly examined it, pronounced the document genuine, and bade them good speed on their way.

"You can go; all right—and luck go with you!" said they; and the Adventurers shouldered their walking-sticks and marched forward, delighted with the powerful trio's unexpected urbanity.

"It is wise to cultivate politeness and to be on civil terms even with savages: live and make allies," remarked Tuflongbo.

"So it is," responded Chickweed; "let me enter that axiom in my note-book." He did so, and dated it; and a hundred times more, as they fared on their anxious way, did he pull out his precious little volume and set down valuable observations. *Now* it was a geological fact, *then* a curious speculation in entomology, and next a query in botany. Tuflongbo aided him with many suggestions; and it appeared probable that their travels in Wildwaste would not prove the least interesting part of the great journey.

"I wonder whether we shall be believed when we come to relate all our wonderful adventures before the Royal Society of Wiseacres, or whether they will pooh-pooh our stories as mere travellers' tales?" observed he, presently. "We won't buoy ourselves up with too sanguine expectations, for they are always averse to credit anything new"

"Look, Tuflongbo, look!" here impatiently interposed Chickweed. "What is that right away above the clouds—is it the Magic Kite?"

"Yes, yes; it is the Magic Kite!" answered the Leader; and his heart gave a great leap of joy. "Whistle, Chickweed, whistle as loud as ever you can, to bring it down. Both stood still and whistled with all their might until the Magic Kite, after tossing its tail thrice with the utmost glee, came floating along the wire above their heads. They saw its broad transparent wings quivering, but its tail was limp and slender as a reed. The White-Feather Fairies nor their bits of gold were there!

"What have you done with my people, Magic Kite?" shouted Tuflongbo, when this disappointing end of his hopes became apparent.

"I left them playing nine-pins in the Crumplecues' Den!" was its mocking answer. "Don't worry or fuss yourselves; it takes all the pleasantness out of your lives. I am very well, thank you; hope you're the same. Good-bye!" And, with another toss of its odious tail, up into the sky it whirled once more; while the Adventurers plodded heavily on, talking as they went on things in general.

They were just in the heat of an argument as to the best way of tossing pancakes—for which delicacy Chickweed had confessed a weakness—when suddenly there arose, not many paces off, a most terrific hulla-balloo, and, advancing steadily towards the scene of tumult, they hid behind a convenient mass of rock; thence they saw two monstrous Crumplecues engaged in a hand-to-hand fight. These Crumplecues

understood, are of the order of Dragons—a desperate and warlike race, concerning whom the chronicles of Sheneland are almost silent. They are supposed to be descended from a younger branch of the family of Ruf-nagumba, and their favourite haunts are on the lower slopes of the Skihi mountains. It was near the base of one of the most lofty peaks in the range that the present encounter was taking place.

It was with the utmost difficulty that Snub, whose disposition was naturally belligerent, was prevented from joining in, and twice Tuflongbo had cautiously to admonish his master to repress his feelings; for the moment Chickweed caught his first glimpse of Dragons combating, he began to skip from one foot to the other, to turn round, clap his hands, fling up his cap, and shriek, as if possessed by the intoxicating concentrated essence of delight; and, indeed, the spectacle was a very impressive one for strangers to Dragons.

Tuflongbo took the business coolly, and was in no wise dismayed at witnessing the blind rage of the Crumplecues; for they seemed too deeply absorbed in settling their own feud to have any attention to spare for indifferent persons. When the travellers first came in sight of them, the combatants were locked together by the tusks, their strong webbed hands clutched each the other's throat, and their eyes glittered under their scaly brows like lumps of red-hot coal. The noise with which they accompanied the struggle was truly fearsome. It consisted of a series of shrill "Eheus," rising successively in a minor scale, which quavered off into a loud whistling roar, then dropt into a strangled groan, only to swell up again more piercingly than ever. A sound it was to chill the marrow in almost any bones, but Tuf-

longbo and Chickweed, fired with adventurous enthusiasm, heeded it no more than a puff of wind; and though Wildwaste quivered to its centre, they did nothing but rejoice.

For some time longer they lurked round the corner of their crag, and watched the progress of the battle securely; but at length the capture of Chickweed betrayed him into falling into the arms and legs in such extravagantly triumphant *œuvres*, that they caught the astonished elder Crumplecue, and changed the scene instant from the lowest comedy to tragedy so disastrous. Before Tuf-longbo could interpose word or deed, the Dragon left his natural haunts, and the fight alone, dashed at the audacious Chickweed, and abbreviated his merry antics by seizing on the collar of his jacket, and lightly tossing him up over his head, where he hung deplorably surprised, and hardly able to make out where he was. But the Crumplecue did not leave him long in suspense; for as soon as he had made his prisoner secure, he indulged in another shrill hullabaloo, and then set off at a lively canter with him up to his den on the mountains of Skihi.

Ere he was out of sight, and ere Tuf-longbo had time to spend one regret on this second most doleful catastrophe, the other Crumplecue became aware of the great Adventurer standing alone and unsupported within his reach. Instantly he snatched him up, tossed him on his head, and set off in the wake of his late enemy, as fast as twelve short waddling legs would carry him. His tail curled crisply to its very tip; and when his captive suggested that two valiant Crumplecues w

finishing their fight much better sport than stealing inoffensive travellers, he politely explained that they were perfect friends, and only fighting for amusement; while to catch a brace of Fairykins astray near the Skihi mountains was such a rare piece of good luck in their monotonous existence, that they could by no means permit it to pass unimproved.

Tuflongbo's bearer soon overtook the other Crumplecue, with poor Chickweed and Snub in his pocket, clinging to his ears. The next moment he was ahead of him, and then the hapless young Wiseacre began to learn in good earnest what a painful thing a game at "follow my leader" may be when played in the land of Giants and Dragons, with Tuflongbo and two Crumplecues for playfellows. I can assure you he was quite as much astonished as delighted—perhaps rather more; for his position was eminently uncomfortable, and nearly all the breath was shaken out of his body. Also Snub was vexatiously noisy, nearly barking himself inside out with vain rage, which gave his master a longing to beat him into silent philosophy. All his trials notwithstanding, he contrived to keep up his spirits miraculously; and if now and then a doleful thought crossed his mind, it soon disappeared before lively ideas of the surprise and mortification he should inflict on his former brother Wiseacres when he came to lecture them on his wonderful adventures and discoveries.

It was by a most rugged road that the Crumplecues went, and their peculiarly irregular gait made the effects of it all the worse for their hapless prisoners. Tuflongbo fared best; he was already getting seasoned to adversity; besides, he had gone through so many hazards, and accomplished so many hair-breadth

escapes, that he could comfort himself with the reflection that the present reverse of fortune would not last long; and while it did last, everything strange and novel in it was only so much more of fact and fancy to store away in his wallet for the future delight of Elfin Court and his juvenile friends. And another thing, he expected to find the highway to rejoin his recreant band, and their shameful game at nine-pins in the Crumplecue's den. If he could win them back to the path of honour and duty, any suffering would be more than amply compensated for.

When Chickweed realised his perilous and painful position, he braved his courage up to endure it, and the invincible courage of his curiosity and good spirits bore him through gallantly. As long as he was within earshot of the Leader, Tufongbo cheered him with homely proverbs fitted to the occasion; but by and by his voice failed to reach him, and craning up his neck, he saw his Captain on the point of vanishing within the yawning arch of a deep cavern. Five minutes after the Crumplecue's head had disappeared, his haughtily curled tail remained in sight—a fact which will give a clearer notion of his size than any more lengthy or laboured description. Chickweed's bearer made direct for the same opening, and when he plunged into its damp and hideous gloom, the young Wiseacre felt precisely as if he was going straight down into the bowels of the earth. Indeed, the Crumplecues' subterranean abode did extend, with innumerable ramifications, all under the range of the Skihi mountains, and having no outlet to the upper air, it was incomparably black and dreary. Twice or thrice, as they plunged through the blind darkness, Chickweed heard

he heard, Tuflongbo's encouraging whistle ; and at last, to his infinite relief and comfort, he found himself alongside of him, his Crumplecue having run himself quite out of breath.

"Well, Chick, how are you now?" inquired the more experienced Adventurer, in a tone of profound sympathy.

"Thank you, Tuflongbo, I am as well as can be expected under the circumstances," was the poor jolted fellow's cheerful reply.

"That is all right ; that is the way to get on, both in Sheneland and Wildwaste. Keep up a good heart, and nothing ever gets to the worst."

"This is a very strange and wonderful place. I wish we had cat's eyes and could see in the dark," said the inquiring Chickweed.

"I can lend you a pair. I never travel without, in case of emergency," replied Tuflongbo ; and the young Wiseacre, having received them from his outstretched groping hand, fitted them on carefully, and began 'to peer about in his inquiring, intelligent way, that suffered nothing worthy of note to escape his scrutiny.

It took him a few moments to accustom himself to the metallic glare of his new organs of vision ; but that once accomplished, he made his observations with great care and accuracy. In the first place, he perceived a marine flavour in the cavern, the walls of which were festooned with dripping weed and tangle similar to those found on the sea-shore. There was no splendour such as he expected, no glittering pillars of crystal or lamps of gems ; nothing but black and gray rocks, and trickling, slimy water running down the walls. The roof was filled with the noiseless flight of innumerable

bats, and the ground was slippery with oozing mud. "This is a horrible, dull hole," then said he. "I don't care, Tuflongbo, how soon we are out of it."

No sooner had he spoken than the scene was suddenly transformed. The overhanging walls retired, the roof sprang up into thousands of interlacing arches, the floor gleamed in a pavement of marble, and a soft light appeared, suffusing the air with a delicious, perfumed warmth. Chumley looked at his cat's eyes in his pocket and resumed his walk the better to enjoy the beautiful revelations that were about to open on his astonished imagination.

The Crumplecues now stood and sat down, leaning their backs wearily against the staves of dried reeds; and the captive Adventurers took this opportunity of sliding down from their perilous positions, and of shaking themselves straight in their clothes. This brief toilette concluded, they crept close to each other, and, gazing round, perceived a circle of six lovely Mermaids coiled up on their dolphin-tails, combing their sea-green hair. A second glance convinced them that these Mermaids were no other than the rescued Elves transformed—poor bits of gossamer washed-out—Pearl, Puff, Cherry, Snow-Flake, Flutter, and Fleece. Their looking-glasses were each composed of one bright ripple set in a rim of silver-crisped foam, and supported by tiny coral crabs. Round their white throats gleamed strings of pearls, and all their eyes shone with a half-sweet, half-sly serenity. Tuflongbo raised his peaked cap to them with superb courtesy, and then gazed about for his deluded followers, whom he detected lurking in a corner, as the Magic Kite had stated, a game at nine—a most dejected, miserable amusement it was.

from their flat and crest-fallen countenances. He forbore to notice them then, and gave them time to recover their buoyancy, which they did by degrees, when they saw their Leader again before them. Sadly, sadly had they suffered in their absence from him!

When the exquisite Mermaids had combed their sea-green hair until it was as smooth and sleek as satin, they began to sing, and sang entrancingly that song which sighs in shells that have been stolen away from the shore. They had but one melody, and that was it—a melody so softly monotonous that it rocked the tired captives to sleep, and when they awoke again the gentle choir had vanished; but the two Crumplecues were still there, eating their supper of turtle and oyster-sauce in a greedy, hungry fashion, as the manner of Crumplecues is.

“Do you think they will offer us anything to eat, Tuflongbo?” whispered Chickweed.

“I don’t expect they will. Hospitable Dragons would have helped strangers first,” was the discouraging answer.

“They won’t give you a crumb; they have kept us on nothing a-day ever since they caught us, when we were dropt by the Magic Kite,” here interposed Larkspur, humbly.

“We have had cruel usage,” added Larch; and each of the other White-Feather Fairykins spoke to the same effect; and, to the honour of the magnanimous Tuflongbo, he neither reminded them that it was nobody’s fault but their own, nor told them how much they had deserved the disasters of which they now complained. He said to them no single word of blame, but regarded their blank and haggard countenances with a

true pity and consideration; and at length proposed giving the Crumplecues the slip, and stealing quietly away while they were busy with their suppers. All his band, only too eager to return to their allegiance, agreed to his proposition with as much applause as their weak state allowed; and, watching their opportunity, they succeeded in getting to the rear of the absorbed Crumplecues, who made much unnecessary noise in engulfing their turkeys in their pepper-sauce, that the creaking of the Adventurers' shoes escaped their notice; then, taking the first opportunity of their passage that presented itself, they set off running as hard as they could go; and when the Crumplecues looked about for their prisoners, to entertain them while they loitered over their dessert of shrimps and winkles, they were a full league away.

"I should like to have another peep at those curious Mermaids, Tuflongbo, should not you?" asked Chickweed, whose curiosity revived in proportion as the risks of pursuit lessened. "How was it they were transformed from Elves to Dolphin Tails, I wonder?"

"I believe they always were Dolphin Tails," cried Chamomile, angrily. "That was why they led us into mischief. As soon as we were safe in this dreadful den, their lovely forms vanished, and when they appeared, it was in their odious, natural shape. They mocked at us cruelly then; called us White-Feather Fairykins and all manner of hard names. I daresay they have not done with their beguilements yet. Oh, my bright Cherry, how art thou transformed!" A wail, as of an Elf bitterly weeping, answered him; but while he started and listened, it wound up with a rippling of Mermaids' laughter.

"It is a pity we ever rescued them out of the Griffins' Palace," sighed Canary, and a sob echoed his voice, then a taunt.

Tuflongbo was sorely puzzled what to think of these double mysterious sounds. Could it be that the wicked sea-sprites, jealous of Elfin beauty, had enchanted their rivals asleep, and then, taking some likeness to their faces, had made the lost Adventurers believe that they were their sweet prizes won out of the hands of Rigituft and Gantlett? It was possible; but he would not mention his suspicion yet, lest he should prematurely awaken false hopes; and the lesson of their sorrow and disappointment was therefore left for some time longer to sink into their anxious, troubled minds. One word he spoke, however, and that was to bid them beware if they fell in with the Mermaids again, which was more than probable.

"They are a treacherous race," said he, "but our craft is sufficient to circumvent their subtlety. It has long been my wish to visit their deep-sea caves; and from the way the land lies, I expect we are on the eve of an opportunity now. I hear their beautiful song again. Do not you? Listen."

All the Adventurers listened, and heard it too. Then a fresh salt air blew in their faces, growing gradually sweeter and warmer, until they espied what looked in the distance like a lance of flame. Drawing nearer, they saw that it was a narrow vertical split in the rocks, and creeping sideways through it, they found themselves, to their great joy and astonishment, on the golden sands of the glorious Balmy Isles.

The blue sky was blazing with noontide splendour, and the tide was rolling boldly in over the ragged reefs

of rocks that fringe the islands with a line of natural fortresses ; while round about a deep gleamy pool played the Mermaids, still singing and combing their sea-green hair as they did in the Crumplecues' Den. As their susceptible victims approached, they feigned not to see them, and went on with their plaintive chant, looking serenely sweet and s _____ they were close on the edge of their bathing _____ en they broke into gestures of delighted surj _____ held out friendly hands to bid them welcome. _____ ere now eight in number, and Tuflongbo frankly _____ s hand to one of the fair witches : it was softly ye _____ arely grasped, and immediately Chickweed and _____ t were caught, the Mermaids changed their slow r. _____ dy to a song of triumph, and, floating round in a dizzy, spiral dance, they carried their charmed captives down, down, *down* into the purple depths of the sea, and cast them faint and exhausted on the shining silver sands of their ocean caves. Tuflongbo was willing to incur some risks for the sake of investigating such wonders of the water-world as are not fatally forbidden to Elfin eyes ; but at this moment consciousness forsook him, and he heard no sound but the sound of the waves moaning, incessantly moaning, as they moan in the song-haunted shells that have been carried away from the sea !





P. 147

The New King and his Court.

2

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE DEEP SEA-CAVES.

THIS ocean cave was a marvellously beautiful place. Tuflongbo and his companions awoke to find themselves tenderly laid on a soft foam-wreath under the vast green arches of the on-flowing billows. Here there was perpetual change, and each change surpassed in enchanting loveliness all that had gone before. It was like a dream—a vision. In all their wonderful adventures, never had they beheld any scene more magically splendid. There was light, but none could tell whence it glowed; there was warmth; there was murmuring music; and there were colours that went and came on the springing columns and arches as come and go the rainbow reflections on April cloud.

Upon a quaint throne, which looked like the phantom of a ship, encrusted with pearl, sat the weird Sea-King, his Court of Mermen and Mermaids gathered around him; behind were heaped the rich spoils of a thousand wrecks. His sceptre was an anchor of gold, broken; his crown a circlet of iron, jewelled with tears. Under his feet crouched Storm and Tempest, watching with wild eyes for their hour of freedom. *Now* they lay bound like slaves, with the strained cables, which, in their moments of power and fury, they could have snapt like silken threads.

While the Adventurers gazed on this strange assemblage with feelings of inexpressible awe, there sounded suddenly a voice from above, rolling in the vaulted still-

ness like an echo of thunder. Storm and Tempest half rose and dragged at their chains; and when a great shout broke over the sea of the winds let loose, they cried hoarsely, "We must go! we must go! They are calling to us! they are calling to us with a thousand tongues!" But the King smote them down to the sands again, and thence they sprang themselves once more at his feet, muttering words of hate and curses as they fell.

Again through the cavernous depths pealed the long summons, and thence they came, blowing sadly in the Ocean Cave. Mermen and Mermaids stood waiting obedient—those who had been the King's adventures amongst the rest—their watchful eyes on the King, whose face began to darken as darkens the sky when thunder broods over it, then flashed as flashes the lightning from the heart of the black cloud. **And for a little while longer there lay upon all an anguish of silence and suspense.**

Then the deep walls and arches of the **Cave heaved** and swelled, the silver sands broke up in **tumultuous** heaps, the phantom-throne swayed for an **instant, then** toppled from its giddy height, and the freed slaves sprang up, bursting their bonds like tow. The King vanished, his golden sceptre of an anchor broken, and his crown, jewelled with tears, floated away; Mermen and Mermaids disappeared together, weeping, and chanting a dirge, and Storm and Tempest reigned tyrants over the sea.

They churned it into foam, they lashed it into fury; they lifted up its mighty waves, and flung them against the clouds that came down to meet them, frantic, and wild. They saw a ship beaten by waves, and joined them, and gave chase unt

it on the rocks ; then they broke it up and cast its spars upon the beach, and drowned its crew : and that night there were shed tears enough to jewel a thousand Sea-Kings' crowns !

When the wild hurricane arose, Tufsongbo and his companions gave themselves up for lost, and, clasping hands, they drifted away, swiftly, swiftly, their eyes closed but their thoughts clear, until out of the darkness that enwrapt them there gradually grew the hazy light of morn ; when they found themselves washed up once more on the strand of the Balmy Isles, which looked now quite lonely and deserted, but was strewn with tangle and seaweed of all kinds, such as are left behind amongst fragments of wreck when Storm and Tempest have worked their will and gone back to the Deep-Sea Caves.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A BLISSFUL REUNION.

THE gallant Leader and Chickweed congratulated themselves and each other upon this happy issue of their adventure with the Mermaids ; but Larch, Larkspur, Mustard, Chamomile, Gooseberry, and Canary were naturally much depressed in their minds still for the loss of their bits of gossamer ; though their Captain had indulged a hope that their prolonged salt-water bath might have washed some of the sentiment and susceptibility out of them. It had not done so, however, and as soon as they found themselves once more landed in safety and escaped from the perils of the deep, they gave

themselves up to the indulgence of regret in the weakest manner. Tuflongbo lost all patience with them, and wished heartily they had their Elves back again ; but as wishing would not bring them, he organised a quick march instead, to revive their spirits, and led the way towards a dense forest of spice-trees which appeared to half-cover the last of the beautiful Balmy Isles.

On entering this scene, they were all reminded of home. The wood, and of the sweet prospects about the Bower—matters which profitably engaged their thoughts and conversation until they were alarmed by a chorus of pathetic cries, like the voices of the Elves.

“To the rescue of our innocence!” cried Tuf-longbo, and instantly rushed forward to the scene of strife, with Snub, Chickweed, and all the band close upon his heels. And when they reached it, what did they see but the despicable Crumplecues bearing away six gentle Elves, who proved to be no other than Pearl, Puff, Cherry, Snowflake, Flutter, and Fleece !

No need then to cry, “Charge !” Larkspur, Larch, Mustard, Chamomile, Gooseberry, and Canary charged with a will, indeed, and being reinforced by Tuflongbo, Chickweed, and the impetuous Snub, they effected such a diversion as made the atrocious Crumplecues thankful to take to their legs and beat an ignominious retreat. The poor little bits of gossamer were then almost fainting, but they still had strength enough left to throw themselves into the arms of their deliverers, and to weep tears of joy upon their bosoms. It was altogether the most pathetic scene Tuflongbo had ever wit-

“Then you were not those cruel, mocking bright Elves ?” demanded the sprightly C

“Oh! no! no!” they replied, in silvery chorus. “We were charmed to sleep, and they stole our beauty; but before they went down to the Deep-Sea Cave, they threw it away, and we have found it again—we have found it again!”

“You are lovelier than ever!” cried their enthusiastic adorers, and there was immediately a grand jubilation.

“You have wiped the blot from your ’scutcheons, and flung your white feathers to the winds, my brave followers!” then said Tuflongbo. “Let the day when you took flight before the Ogres be henceforth forgotten.”

And then, having re-formed in the usual order of march, they proceeded on their way through the wood, and left it by a route directly opposite to that at which they had entered the spicy avenue. This route ran along a narrow isthmus, which, at low water, connected the island with the mainland, and having left it behind, and advanced a little way across an elevated plain, they found themselves in a lovely country, diversified with hills and dales, streamlets and copses, while the green turf was everywhere enamelled with gay flowers. The same sense of familiarity that had struck Tuflongbo before now startled him again, and, standing still, he exclaimed, eagerly, “Where are we?” To which his comrades replied, shouting as with one voice, “Almost at home—almost at home!”

And there, behold, they were, indeed, on a bright hill-top, looking down on the chief city of Sheneland, on the Royal Palace, on the Enchanted Bower, and a thousand other charming and beloved scenes. The shock of this delightful surprise was too much for Tuflongbo’s patriotic feelings, and he wept for joy at the prospect of approaching reunion with all who were dear to him; while his

gallant followers embraced enthusiastically in the ardour of the moment, and the fair Elves clapped their snowy hands for glee, there swelled up towards them a sound of distant music, and they espied a procession with banners, winding in and out of the glades of Elfinwood, apparently coming to meet and congratulate them on their safe return.

Immediately they slipped from their Chameleon coats, which wore a beautiful green hue in the freshness of morning, set their feet straight, took firm grip of their staves, and marched bravely on, their pretty companions blushing at their heroes' triumphant appearance.

Tuflongbo, Chickweed, and Snub headed the column, Snub exalting his mere stump of a tail as if it were a handsome feathery member, and perking up his ears with airs and antics such as would have been unpardonable in any but a far-travelled dog. Chickweed did not look very exuberant, being in reality disappointed at the abrupt conclusion of his adventures; but Tuflongbo trod as if upon air, so proudly did his heart beat at having made his great journey in search of Ogres successfully, and brought back all his band safe and sound after their numerous hazards and hair-breadth escapes.

Thus they marched leisurely on in the morning, and gracefully as if returning from a party of pleasure, until they approached the Enchanted Bower, where they found Queen Osmunda waiting with her bevy of Maids of Honour, Court Pages, Muffin, and Mother Dignity in attendance. There was no formal state reception, but only a very cordial greeting on all sides. He shook hands with Tuflongbo, and graciously
on him as a pledge of her approval the Sere

Complacency and Grand Cross of Vanity, which made him feel superlatively bland and sleek within.

Chickweed was next recognised as an eccentric character, then Larkspur, Larch, Mustard, Canary, Gooseberry, and Chamomile, were congratulated ; and finally the Elves, who had gone through such terrible persecutions at the hands of fiery-tailed Griffins, of Crumplecues, and of envious Mermaids, were kissed, cried over, and bewildered with thousands of questions, until Mother Dignity took them under her protection, and sent messengers to apprise their mourning families of their blissful deliverance. Meanwhile the Queen amiably ratified their betrothal to their gallant adorers, and then returning to the palace with them under her special care, left Tuflongbo and his companions to receive the exuberant welcome of the miscellaneous multitudes that had poured forth to meet them as soon as the news of their arrival spread.

Foremost amongst these came the eloquent Wild Sorrel, who could hardly find terms to express his ecstasy. Then came Poplar, Sycamore, Sardony, Meze-reon, Borage, Box, Dandelion, Fig, and hosts of others, to all of whose good wishes Tuflongbo hearkened with a joyous patience, while ever and anon turning his head in the hope of beholding his father and mother making their eager way through the crowd. But they did not appear, neither did Rudbeakia or Gourd, his old masters ; so Tuflongbo bethought himself that they were *old*, and therefore could hardly come out thus far to meet him ; and as soon as he could conveniently withdraw himself from the press he did so, and sped away alone, light as a leaf upon the tree, towards the Chief City of Sheneland—that being the nearest way to his father's house ; and

on the road he indulged his heart in a thousand sweet visions of their glad meeting, the tears swelling in his eyes again and again, though in his breast there was no sense but one of intense happiness and thankfulness.

C H A P T E R XXVIII.

THE OLD COBBLER'S MESSAGE TO TUFLONGBO.

TUFLONGBO loitered constant by the way, but walked his swiftest up the straight street that runs through the midst of the city until he drew near to the stall where lived the old Cobbler with the big head and buckles to his breeches, court-fashion, who had made him his famous shoes—square-toed, double-soled, and with nails in the heels. The Cobbler was sitting by the open window, still at work, and raising his gray head as Tuflongbo approached, he cried out—"Thou hast gotten back, then, Tuflongbo! Didst thou make a good journey?"

"Very good," replied the leader of the Adventurers. "I will come and tell you of it anon; now I go to rejoice the hearts of my dear father and mother." Thus speaking, he would have hastened forward, but the old Cobbler said, gravely, "Step in hither, my friend, I have a message to thee from them;" and Tuflongbo feeling, he knew not why, inexpressibly chilled and saddened, turned aside into the Cobbler's stall.

"How long is it, Tuflongbo, since th^u h^{ast}



Tufongbo visits the old Cobbler.



father and mother farewell?" asked he, still steadily plying his task.

"I know not—travellers take little heed of time," was Tuflongbo's answer.

"Thy beard is grown, and the fairykin curls on thy head are thinner and less bright than they were. *Their* heads were gray at thy departing, if thou dost remember"

"I remember nothing but that I was very glad to go."

"Still thou wast a good son, Tuflongbo: it is only natural that fairykins should plume their wings for flight when they are fully grown. They bade me tell thee once more how they loved thee, since they were not permitted to await thy return. They also have set off on a journey, but thou wilt overtake them presently."

"Whither are they gone?" asked the Adventurer.

"They are gone on before thee to Shadowland, Tuf-longbo. I also shall soon be on my way thither, for my leather is nearly used up and my work ended. Another winter over, and I shall be setting forth too. Tell me how thy shoes that I made thee have worn?"

"They have worn well—I see not yet that they are any the worse," replied Tuflongbo.

"They are, nevertheless, imperceptibly losing strength every day. But thou hast many another long journey and wild adventure before thee, and they will outlast them all. Be not cast down, my friend; time stands not still. Go back to thy brave followers, and to thy work of traveller through Sheneland, until Shadowland and the Inn of Rest are gained. You and I shall hardly meet here again, Tuflongbo, and strangers are at home in

thy father's house. Let us now say good-bye, and go. Good-bye, Tuflongbo."

"Good-bye," responded the weary Adventurer, and, with his trusty staff in his hand, he turned away, leaving the days of his youth behind for ever.

XXIX.

LITTLE IDLE, AND THE FAIRY OF THE CREEPING PLANTS AND THE SILVER TENDRILS.

ABOUT this time there was a Shencland beyond the Moon, where the Fairies reign, a Little Old Woman, whose house was nothing but the hollow trunk of a great Ash-Tree. Old Woman was very poor, and got her living by spinning the gossamer the Fairies wore when they went to Elfin Court. This gossamer was finer than any spider's web, and all over it were sprents of dew, more bright than diamonds, and silver stripes shot through it aslant that were caught and woven in when the stars were shining.

Old Woman had a little Maid to help her, whose name was Idle; it was her task to gather the rays as they fell, and carry them to Old Woman's wheel. Idle was fat and white, but she had no colour in her cheeks; and the Fairies did not like her for their playfellow at all, because she was so slow, so *very* slow. If they cried, "Run, Idle, run! the stars are going out, and you have not gathered rays enough yet to make Try-for-it a coat a-piece!" there she would st one finger in her mouth until the rays were

out of her reach, and then she had to go home with only one or two, and sometimes none at all.

When that happened, Old Woman very properly gave her no supper, and whipped her before she put her to bed. Idle did not like that, and promised every time that she would do better in future ; but the next night when she was sent out to gather the silver stripes, she would sit down and go to sleep until some good Fairy twitched her hair, or tickled her nose, when she would lift herself up yawning and creep along the ground too slowly to catch any rays, except those that had got tangled in among the bushes and prickly plants, and could not get away fast enough ; and she even lost *them* sometimes for stopping to wonder whether she should scratch her hands in pulling them out ; and while she was thinking and thinking, behold they just gave one double and twist and were gone !

Now, this had happened three nights, one after the other. Three nights, one after the other, Idle had gone out, promising to bring in a sheaf of rays ; three nights, one after the other, she had come back yawning and empty-handed ; and three nights, one after the other, she had been whipped, and sent to bed without any supper.

As ill-luck would have it, there was just then going to be a Grand Ball at Elfin Court, and Old Woman had been commanded to spin a thousand and ten new gossamer robes of the choicest patterns for the occasion. She set up her wheel in the doorway of her Ash-Tree, utterly resolved that no Fairy should go to Court in shabby clothes, if she could help it, and, being in high good humour, she gave Idle some honey to her breakfast, and began to spin. First she spun a few robes of

a pink ground, embroidered with fronds of moss ; then she spun a few more, all shining like a moted sunbeam ; and a few more of sky-blue, lined with silver ; and a few more of thistle-gray, edged with scarlet. These were for the most distinguished Fairies about Fairy Queen's Court ; but for Fairy Queen herself, Old Woman said she must have a ray and a half gathered off the dew on the wild white roses that grew over the Enchanted Bower a mile away through the forest.

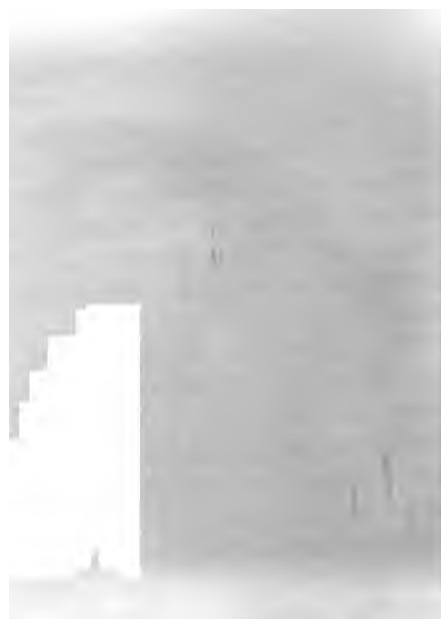
Now, Old Woman, hard as she could spin, was not able to walk, because she was lame on her feet, and naughty as Idle had been for three nights, one after the other, she was obliged to trust her again ; but before she sent her out, she spoke these words to her in a very serious tone of voice, and with one eye looking through her big horn spectacles at the rod in the corner which was used to whip Idle when she came home empty-handed :

"Now, Idle, hearken to me," was her solemn commencement ; "you have not far to go, nor much to carry, and you must on no account sit down to rest ; for to-night the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils is abroad, and he will catch you if you do. Perhaps he will kill you ; but even if he does not kill you, he will tie you hand and foot, and keep you a prisoner as long as you live. Now, remember what I say, and run away, and be a good Idle !"

So Idle primmed herself up and put on her shoes and went out in the finest intentions. "I'll be as quick as Trip, as clever as Try-for-it," thought she ; but as she crossed the threshold one of her shoes fell off, and she did not stay to put it on again, because it would have been so much trouble to stoop, but went forward till she



The Old Woman in the Hollow Tree and her little Maid Idle. P. 158



was out of sight of the cottage made in the hollow of the Ash-Tree, keeping always on the edge of the soft turf by the wayside, and chirping over and over to herself how good she was going to be. This chirping presently put her out of breath, and she ceased to walk so fast, also she began to feel the stones in the turf, and to wish she had not lost her shoe.

"It is only a mile, however," said she; "and I have plenty of time. The stars will shine till cock-crowing, and it's only a mile!"

When she had made out how short a way she had to go, Idle thought she might as well not fatigue herself. The wild white roses on the Enchanted Bower would be there all the same with the dew upon them and the rays in their hearts if she enjoyed herself a little bit, as they would if she hurried and tired herself ever so much. And who would know? Not Old Woman, for she had left her spinning green coats for Tippetty Wichet and his brothers, and they were not likely to be finished until long after she could get home again.

"And as for the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils," said Idle, lying down comfortably on a mossy bank, "I don't believe in him one bit; so here I shall stay and have a nice pleasant nap."

In a very few minutes the little silly thing was fast asleep, and Old Woman, spinning at the door-way of her house in the hollow of the Ash-Tree, had finished Tippetty Wichet's coat, and his brothers' too, long before she woke again.

Now, if Idle had looked up at the tree which overshadowed the mossy bank before she lay down, she would have seen a most strange and horrible sight. She would have seen a wizened, monkey-faced creature

perched at the end of one of the branches, grinning from ear to ear. He was very still, until Idle shut her eyes, and then he began to toss himself over and over, and up and down, and backwards and forwards, but always holding on to the end of the branch; and when Idle gave her first snore, (Idle always snored, which was not pretty in a little maid,) he chuckled and laughed, "Hoe, hee! hi, hi! ho, ho!" until you would have thought he must strangle himself. But he did not. He only chuckled again, and then crowed out triumphantly, "I've got her! I've got her! I've got her! Little Idle, Old Woman's Maid!" until from every flower-cup, and every pebble, and every cushion of moss, started up the Elves and Sprites, all curious to see what there was to do.

They ought to have been sorry for Idle when they saw her lying asleep under the tree where lived the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils; but she had been such a dull, tiresome Idle all her life, that they had no pity left for her; and they only chuckled and laughed and crowed too, until the forest was all alive with their fun; and Old Woman, waiting at her door in the hollow of the Ash-Tree, with Tippetty Wick's finished coat in her lap, wondered what was the matter, and said, "Could that naughty Idle have fallen into trouble again?"

But into whatever trouble Idle might have fallen, Old Woman could not go to help her; for, you know, she was lame of her feet, and could not walk; so she only sighed, and began to spin more coats, and this time, having no rays for trimmings, she used white cats' whiskers, which were rather stiff, but made a variety. Idle therefore slept and snored on until the stars winked themselves out, and neither ray nor dew was left upon

the wild white roses that overgrew the Enchanted Bower. It was quite chill and shivery when she awoke, and the gray colour of the morning before the sun is risen was amongst the trees.

“Oh, dear! what shall I do?” cried Idle. “I have nothing to carry home. Old Woman will whip me again, and Fairy Queen will have to go to the Ball in an old gown!”

When Idle made this lamentation, there was a spiteful little giggle up in the tree, and the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils threw down a fat snail on her face, which made her give a great spring to get away. But directly she did that, she found that she was tied fast, hand and foot, flat on her back, and the monkeyfied creature on the branch sang out, “I’ve caught you, Idle, though you didn’t believe in me one bit. I’ve caught you, and you can’t get away;” as if he would only have liked to see her try.

For a little while Idle lay still and dismally afraid with the shiny black snail crawling all over her face; for she could not shake her head to throw it off, or get so much as a finger free to poke it away. She kept her mouth screwed up, and her eyes tight shut, and felt all over such a dreadful weight, as if in her sleep she had been taken out of her own body, and put into one as big as that of Giant Slouchback; but when she had been some time quiet, she peeped and saw that she was no larger than when Old Woman sent her out the night before to gather the rays for Fairy Queen’s ball-dress. What made her unable to stir was, that thousands of the Tendrils of a great Creeping Plant that grew out of the roots of the tree were twined about her limbs. Her ankles were bound together by them, and her hands

were fastened to her sides ; round each of her fingers there was a score of rings at least, and so twined, twisted, and knotted, that nobody but the ugly Wicked Fairy who twined, twisted, and knotted them, could ever unloose them again. Idle fancied they did not look very strong ; but when she tried to break them, she found they were as tough as whipcord, and besides had little pricks all over them, that stung her like wasps whenever she attempted to move. So, at last, she gave up trying, and let the nasty fat black snail crawl over her and cover her with slime.

The Wicked Fairy laughed and shouted with glee at the sight, and pelted her with slugs and caterpillars and damp red worms, until the Elves and Sprites, who dislike ugly things, were fain to run away, and leave Idle to her punishment. Then the cold frogs and toads began to hop over her and croak at her, and the young nettles and briars amongst the moss, and the Tendrils of the Creeping Plant, grew up so fast before noon, that the good folks passing by that way could not see Idle tied down amongst them.

And when Old Woman found that she did not return, she got another Little Maid, whose name was Brisk, who served her much better than Idle had ever done, and who was a great favourite with the Fairies, because she was a Little Maid of wonderful taste and imagination. By her help Old Woman had all the new Court dresses ready in time for the Grand Ball ; the chief novelties, besides Fairy Queen's royal robes of silver rays and carnation, being white lily bells for her Majesty's four and twenty Maids of Honour, and blue jerkins and scarlet stockings for the four and twenty Court Pages.

CHAPTER XXX.

FAIRY QUEEN'S HERALDS PROCLAIM THE GRAND
BALL AT ELFIN COURT.

ONE beautiful morning, at the beginning of Midsummer days, Fairy Tippet and Fairy Wink were enjoying themselves in a long gossip under the shadow of a mushroom, when they saw the Queen's Heralds coming, and heard the great sound of trumpeting which always preceded their advance ; so they sprang upon the top of the mushroom, to get a grand view of the Royal Procession.

First came twelve banner-bearers, bearing banners of poppy-silk ; then the Chief Herald, whose name of state was the Grand Pomp, in a scarlet cloak and flap hat, his assistant heralds, Trig and Tart, one on each side of him, carrying copies of the Royal Proclamation.

Behind them followed three score and five trumpeters, with trumpets of golden reeds, through which, at the entrance of every glade, and on the top of every hill, they blew a blast, long, loud, and shrill. Three times, with a pause between, they blew a blast, long, loud, and shrill, and then the Grand Pomp drew himself up, and read the Royal Proclamation.

“To all Sheneland, to all Fairies, Elves, and Sprites, by the Queen's courtesy, greeting. Come to the Ball. Come! come!! come!!!”

After which, the three score and five trumpeters blew another blast, long, loud, and shrill, and the Royal Procession moved on. Tippet and Wink bowed most respectfully as the Grand Pomp passed by the mushroom

on which they were perched, and kept profound silence until the last of the trumpeters was out of sight, when they immediately began to discuss the coming event.

"Of course, Tippet, *you* will go," said Wink, wriggling with joyous vanity at the prospect of appearing at Elfin Court Ball, for he was young, and had never been bidden to one before.

Tippet replied carelessly that he did not know—he had attended so many. He was there the last time, and had found very little intellectual amusement indeed. *The* event of the evening was Tricksy's tumble into the trifle, when he got up to return thanks for his wife Sweetlips' health having been drunk at supper.

Wink had never heard of it! Oh, *would* Tippet tell him?

Tippet said he felt scruples. As a rule, he disapproved of gossip, and thought that what passed at Fairy Queen's table ought not to be made the subject of common conversation; but as Wink was his *particular* friend, and young and inexperienced besides, he would just tell *him*. Perhaps it might be a *lesson* to him.

"It appears," began Tippet, in the dignified narrative manner of one who knows he has something worth hearing to relate; "it appears that when Tricksy and Sweetlips were presented to Fairy Queen, on the occasion of their happy and auspicious union, her Majesty had graciously promised Tricksy that his lovely bride should sit on the Dais of Beauty, at her right hand, at the supper of the coming ball. Imagine Tricksy's elation; it quite lifted him off his balance! Between the presentation and the Ball, I never met him, I give you my honour, that he was not walking on tiptoe, with his little cocked nose in the air, so that he could not behold your humble

servant. But we all know the upshot of Court favours ! I am proud to say that I owe my country *nothing*. My services may have been *great*, but——”

“Don’t be tedious, Tippet,” interposed the audacious Wink, deprecatingly ; so the ancient courtier smiled, sighed, and again took up the thread of his story.

“My dancing days are over, though I have footed it amongst the lightest, and I have almost lost my relish for the dainty ceremonials of supper ; but when the trumpets blew, and Grand Pomp marshalled the way for the Queen and her Ladies, I followed with the stream, and soon saw that Sweet-lips was duly placed on her Gracious Majesty’s right hand. It is impossible, Wink, to say which was the lovelier. The Queen wore her crown and royal robes of rich colours, but Sweet-lips was all in white, as pure as herself ; and I do consider, *between you and me*, that she might have made a better choice than of the pert fellow Tricksy.”

In this confidential observation Wink perfectly coincided, but not with reference to Tippet individually ; for all Sheneland knew that Tippet had had no success in his wooings, and that he remained a bachelor solely because no fairy, except one of the three sisters, Snip, Snap, and Snarl, would have him, and he could not make up his mind to try any of them *yet*.

“The fellow,” Tippet went on scornfully, referring to Tricksy—“the fellow, as usual, looked like a harlequin, and close at his elbow were Quip and Crank, every moment prompting him to do or say some mad thing or other. I sat on pins and needles, for there was no knowing if even the Queen’s own Fairy Majesty would be safe from his unseemly antics. However, the Queen overlooked them, and once or twice condescended to

laugh merrily at what he said, though, I confess, the jest seemed but poor to *me*; and at length Muffin, the Royal Master of the Ceremonies, by the Queen's command, ordered us to charge our glasses, and drink the health of the sweetest bride and most gallant groom that Shencland had beheld since the last marriage at Elfin Court.

"It was done; the cheering died into silence. Sweet-lips dropt a modest 'Thank you;' and I was congratulating myself *that* bore was over, when it occurred to Tricksy that here was an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and you know Wink, whether *he* is the sort of fellow to let it slip. He stood up—on tiptoe, as little fellows always do—and leaned his fingers on the table, bending them so far back, in his nervous efforts to be smart, that it made me wretched to watch them; and stretching forward so far, that I thought he wanted to knock his head against his opposite neighbour's. I knew he would come to grief from the beginning, but I cannot say that I felt really sorry for him when, in the difficult agonies of his eloquence, his legs slipped from under him, and he fell face foremost into a dish of trifle! But I pitied Sweet-lips; I did, indeed, Wink. Tricksy was carried out by Quip and Crank, moaning grievously; but that was mere make-believe. We all knew he couldn't be *hurt*, though he raised such a sympathy amongst the ladies. Indeed, if one must be a fool, and fall with one's face into anything, trifle is excellent for the purpose. At the accident our Gracious Queen herself deigned to express concern. She was eating oyster at the time."

Wink seemed glad to hear it, and remarked that oyster in moderation was a capital thing. At which

Tippet shuddered, and replied that the pleasures of the table were nothing to him now, he had such a shocking digestion; and that subject once broached by the elderly sufferer, there is no saying how long it might have lasted, had not the fashionable promenade, by which grew the mushroom where the gossips sat, suddenly become thronged with all the youth, beauty, and wit of Sheneland.

There was but one theme of conversation and discussion throughout the gay assemblage, and that was, of course, the coming Ball at Elfin Court. Tippet and Wink recognised their friends, and mingled in the crowd. Tippet was a notorious old scandal-monger, and many dowager fairies liked a chat with him on things in general; and Wink was a young spark who was only just beginning to be tolerated, for many persons of taste said that his manners were forward and flippant, without the pleasing innocence of Tricksy. However, each met a welcome; and while Tippet was gossiping with Wrinkle and Sneer, Wink attached himself to a bevy of pretty Elves, who were flirting their rose-leaf parasols in the sunshine, and prattling the dearest nonsense; and he made himself so agreeable, that Elf Bluebell promised him the first dance with her at Elfin Court Ball—a promise which he confided with much affectation of secrecy to every male individual of his acquaintance before the afternoon was half over, and they said he was a conceited Wink, and gave himself airs.

And while the fashionable promenade was still crowded, the Royal Procession of Heralds, Banner-bearers, and Trumpeters, returned from sounding the Queen's Proclamation throughout Sheneland; and a

way was made for them to pass through in the deepest silence; and when the Grand Pomp reached the Sun Pavilion, at the top of the walk, he faced about, the banners were waved, the trumpets blew a blast, long, loud, and shrill, and Trig and Tart read the Proclamation thrice over.

“To all Sheneland, to all Fairies, Elves, and Sprites, by the Queen’s courtesy, greeting. Come to the Ball! Come! come!! come!!!”

And when that was done, the banners were lowered, and the Heralds’ Procession disappeared from the respectful gaze of the people, within the golden gates of the Sun Pavilion.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GRAND BALL AT ELFIN COURT, AND WHAT HAPPENED THERE.

WHEN the evening of the Grand Ball arrived, in every bower throughout Sheneland there was great fuss and jubilation; but Fairy Queen’s bower saw by far the sweetest sight of all. There was Fairy Queen herself in her royal robes of carnation and silver rays, with a petticoat of gossamer, and a crown of diamond dew-sparkles on her head. Around her were her four and twenty Maids of Honour, all clad alike in white lily bells, and her four and twenty Pages, all clad alike in blue jerkins and scarlet stockings.

To the sound of the trumpets, and with the Grand Pomp strutting stage-fashion before her, Fairy Queen, with her Prime Minister, Prince Goldheart, on her right

hand, and all her Court filed in graceful procession up the Great Hall of Dancing, where the company was assembled, and only waiting for her Majesty's arrival to open the revels. The guests made their profoundest reverences, and then Muffin, the Master of the Ceremonies, clapped his hands thrice ; upon which the music struck up, and the four and twenty Maids of Honour in lily bells immediately paired off with the four and twenty Pages in blue jerkins and scarlet stockings, as a signal that the rest of the company might begin to dance.

Fairy Queen sat on-a throne on the Dais of Beauty, admiring everything and conversing affably with whomsoever approached her, thus making herself popular, and winning golden opinions from all her faithful subjects. She bowed to Tippet in recognition of his original remark that it had been a fine day, and he went about Sheneland all the rest of his life as a Fairy of Distinction, because he said he had been permitted to make a confidential communication to the Queen.

Wink, Trip, Try-for-it, Frolic, Finick, Turn, Twist, Lush, and Trap, danced with Bluebell, Satin, Sleek, Sly, Flip, Arch, Mite, Dot, and Dimple, and a very pretty dance it was ; for they were all gay young fairies, with light heads and light heels, who knew nothing of the cares of life, except by hearsay. Tricksy and Sweet-lips did not dance, because they were staid married people ; but Sly whispered it about that Tricksy's feet were going under the bench to the tune of the music, all the while he was sitting so demure by his wife.

Tippety Wichet and his Brothers, by Fairy Queen's express wish, danced with the three ugly Elves, Snip, Snap, and Snarl ; for her Majesty had benignly remarked that at Court *courtesy* should prevail, and that

it hurt her to see those who were plain or out of date rudely neglected for the younger and prettier faces. But after that penitential hop, Tippetty Wichet and his Brothers were at liberty to choose for themselves ; and they danced with Posy, Dove, and Poppet, three lovely sister Elves, who made their first appearance that night.

The Ball went on joyously, and everybody was in a state of extreme enjoyment, when Muffin clapped his fat hands thrice, the instruments of music became suddenly silent, the trumpets sounded, and the Grand Pomp bounced in much flustered, and mumbled out some announcement which nobody quite heard. Then appeared a lean, little, old Fairy, with enormous long legs, hidden under a sweeping green train of ferns, who was a perfect stranger at Court, though, from her haughty self-possession, you might have thought she had been there every day of her life since she was born.

Fairy Queen looked dignified and astonished, and begged the Grand Chamberlain, who stood behind her throne, to discover the style and title of that Lady who had entered her presence with the assumption of royal state ; but the Grand Pomp had quite lost his presence of mind, and did not remember anything but what sounded like the hiss of a serpent when the stranger spoke to give her name.

While the inquiry was pending, the lean, little, old Fairy, with the enormous long legs, advanced straight up to the steps of the Dais of Beauty, paused before Fairy Queen, and bowed condescendingly. Fairy Queen consulted her dignity, and bowed in the same manner, and the company began to whisper all round, and to titter respectfully in remote corners and behind pillars.

The stranger did not seem to take it amiss ; she looked over the heads of the crowd, curled her lips, showed her teeth, and scowled at them, but nothing more. Sncer and Scandal said they believed they had seen her somewhere before ; but they were in no hurry to claim her acquaintance, and she did not seem to have a single friend in the room.

Fairy Queen, to do the honours of her Court, begged her to be seated, but the stranger declined ; she could not *sit*, she was obliged to her Majesty. Would she dance, then ? She could not *dance*, she was obliged to her Majesty. So she was permitted to stand by the wall, and look grand, without being taken any more notice of, except by Tippet and Wink, who got into her immediate vicinity, and jealously watched for some accident to the fern train which might reveal the secret of her enormous length of leg.

The Fairy had a sharp face, and a watchful expression of uneasiness upon it, as if she expected from moment to moment to be shocked by some unpleasant spectacle. Especially she kept an eye on the doorway ; and when there was a little bustle and hum about it, as of admiration and surprise, she raised herself up so that Tippet and Wink saw two wooden pegs under her fern train with which she had gracefully eked out her own short limbs. They immediately told Whisper, who set it about the room that the late distinguished arrival was a Fairy with wooden legs ! This intelligence, following close upon the sensation of jealousy, wonder, and awe which her assumption of royal state had excited, could not fail to create a feeling of general satisfaction ; but even that gave way before the delight that seized upon everybody when the trumpets blew again, and the Grand

Pomp announced, in the midst of a profound silence, "Prince Glee and Princess Trill."

Their appearance was as sudden as it was unexpected, and the multitude could not repress their cheers of welcome. Prince Glee was Fairy Queen's own cousin, and Princess Trill was the lovely niece of a despotic and malicious old Fairy, who had for many years kept herself aloof from Court because she had been refused a place about her Gracious Majesty's person when she ascended the throne of Sheneland. She was quite welcome to enjoy her solitude and dulness, if she preferred them, for she was exceedingly mischievous and disagreeable; but all the world cried shame upon her when she snatched Princess Trill away from the innocent pleasures of Elfin Court, and proclaimed her right and authority to immure that young and happy creature in any one of her own dreary residences, to keep her safe from the vanities and temptations of Elfin-Life. Princess Trill wept bitterly, and entreated to be allowed to remain with her companions, the Queen's Maids of Honour, or, at least, to take leave of them, and give them messages of farewell to Prince Glee, who loved her.

But her Aunt flew into a passion, and refused her every grace, and immediately poor Princess Trill was shut up in the ugly pumpkin coach, and carried away nobody knew whither. When this cruel event happened, Prince Glee was absent from Court on a mission for his cousin the Queen, whose most trusted envoy he had been ever since her accession to the crown; but as soon as he returned there were innumerable friends waiting to tell him the disastrous news about Princess Trill. At first he turned very pale, then he turned very red,

but when he was calm again he cried: "Never will I sleep on thistle-down again until I find that sweet, persecuted Princess, and deliver her from captivity."

At which the whole assembly applauded, and six young Knights-Fairy of the Royal Guard volunteered themselves as his companions, by the Queen's own gracious sympathy and permission.

And immediately they set off, travelling night and day, and running into many perils, but always getting safe out of them, though they could hear no tidings of Princess Trill, which saddened them all inexpressibly. They had been three months away, and were still on their bootless journeyings, when they encountered the Queen's Heralds proclaiming the Grand Ball at Elfin Court, and the six young Knights-Fairy said they would not miss it for the world. So Prince Glee gave them leave to go home, but he continued his travels; for he had no heart to enjoy himself while his dear Princess Trill was held in durance. The Knights-Fairy carried their sad news of failure back to Court, and gave it as their opinion that her Aunt had *drowned* the lovely Princess, and that Prince Glee would never see her more unless he went out of Sheneland and into the Water-World himself.

Imagine, then, the great joy and elation felt by all the guests at the Ball when the Grand Pomp announced, in his biggest voice,—

"Prince Glee and Princess Trill!"

The crowd pressed forward and beheld the sweet Princess all one rosy blush under her veil, and Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, came bowing and scraping his loose left leg to lead them to the Dais of Beauty, where Fairy Queen was waiting to welcome them. The

dancing ceased; but the music played a fine march, while all the company fell into rank, right and left, to see the Prince and Princess walk up to the Dais, with Muffin smiling on them like a full moon.

Amongst those whose curiosity was the most excited was the lean, little, old Fairy with wooden legs and a fern train. Craning forward her head, she beheld Princess Trill, and Prince Glee leading her by the hand. Her face turned green, she gasped for breath, and would have rushed forward to separate them had not that spirit of mischief, Crank, put his foot in her way just in the nick of time. She stumbled against it, tripped, and fell flat across the space left by the company—full in front of the Queen, of Muffin, and of the Prince and Princess; tearing her fern train to ribbons, and in her fall displaying the two stout wooden pegs on which she had tried to exalt herself above the heads of all Elfin Court.

Everybody else smiled, but Princess Trill, full of terror, cried out, "My Aunt Spite! my Aunt Spite!" and clung to the Prince for protection; but when the wicked old Fairy did not attempt to rise, her tender heart was touched, and she exclaimed, "Woe is me, for she is dead! she is dead!"

But the great Court Doctor Pille declared that she was nothing like it; and some young fellows having carried her out to the air, she was presently brought to under the Royal Pump, and then given in charge to Catch and Keep, the Queen's head-jailers, until it was determined what punishment she had incurred by her miserable behaviour.

This painful incident occupied but a few minutes, and Princess Trill forgot it immediately the Queen took her hand, called her "Fair Cousin," kissed her, and made

her sit by her on the Dais of Beauty, with Prince Glee on the other side. Then her Majesty was graciously pleased to be curious about their adventures, and silence being proclaimed, the Prince related them.

“Your Majesty has heard all that happened before the six young Knights-Fairy left me to return to Elfin Court Ball,” he began, “and therefore I will resume the thread of my narrative where it was broken off. Being left alone I wandered on until I came to a vast building, which appeared to have the smallest windows in Sheneland, and no door at all. I knew in a moment that I had discovered Castle Craft, and while I was sorrowfully surveying its grim walls I heard a sound which, at first, I mistook for the cry of a bird, but listening a little longer, I recognised it as the voice of Princess Trill, weeping and wailing in her cruel captivity. I was immediately furnished with magical strength; I stormed the castle single-handed, flung open the secret gates, slew Lies and Fibs, the guards, and penetrated to the secret chambers, where I found many prisoners wearing life away in the dreariest state you can imagine. Then I set free, and afterwards I fought my way up to the highest chamber of a dismal tower, and there, immured in darkness, I found the sweet Princess. She sprang towards me, I bore her down the stair, and mounting my favourite steed, Swift-and-Sure, we fled from the domains of Castle Craft, and arrived here in time for the Ball. Fortunately for us, Aunt Spite had gone abroad that evening on a mission of malice regarding other persons, or doubtless she would have impeded our escape. Finding the Princess gone on her return to Castle Craft, she has followed us here with rage in her wicked heart to separate us; but she will never succeed!”


And sweet Princess Trill smiled happily, and repeated, "Never!"

Fairy Queen was charmed with her Cousin's story, and as soon as it was finished all the guests went in to supper, where Muffin, by her Majesty's command, proposed the health of Prince Glee and Princess Trill. It was drunk standing, with nine times nine cheers; after which the company shivered their glasses, that they might never serve a meaner purpose.

Then Prince Glee made a short but beautiful speech, which even Tippet applauded; and Wink made the remark to pretty little Dot, who sat beside him, that he should know what to say *now* when *he* stood in Glee's shoes; which Dot interpreted to her own satisfaction, and smiled and blushed accordingly.

And both Ball and Supper went off so well that Fairy Queen was highly gratified; and as soon as she was sleepy, Muffin nodded his head thrice, and softly clapped his fat hands. Then all the lights at Elfin Court were put out, and everybody went home to bed.

And the next day the Queen issued her royal mandate that henceforward Spite should be banished from Sheneland for ever. Wink, Quip, Crank, Trap, Catch, and Keep, were ordered to escort her to the frontier; and in such wild company I leave you to imagine whether she had a pleasant journey or not.



CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SOLEMN FESTIVAL OF MIDSUMMER EVE.

MIDSUMMER EVE is a very great and solemn Festival in Sheneland.

Between Sunset and Moonrise all Elfin Court goes out in procession, with Fairy Queen, to the Enchanted Bower in the midst of Elfinwood. Torches are carried before them by the Gnomes who work in the Mines, to light the path which winds, and turns, and twists, through a bewildering labyrinth for miles and miles. The procession is made in perfect silence, and all the way as the Fairies go they pluck flowers, weeds, herbs, and branches—never pausing, never stooping, never speaking, and never looking either to the right hand or to the left. As they pass into the Enchanted Bower they cast them all down into one heap by the door, and then range themselves mutely round the garlanded walls, while Fairy Queen takes her seat on the Golden Throne in the midst.

All is so still that the chirp of the insects which wake by night in Elfinwood is heard like a chorus of music, mingled with the chiming of blue-bells and lily-bells in the moist and shady places. Suddenly, the inner gate of the Enchanted Bower opens, and a cold breath blows softly through; then there is a sound as of trailing robes over crisp leaves in autumn, and then appears a misty figure whose face is covered with a veil. She moves like a shadow, diffusing all around her a chill air, and takes her place beside the heap of flowers, weeds, herbs,

and branches, which the Fairies gathered by the way and flung down in a heap at the entrance of the Enchanted Bower.

As she comes forth, the Moon rises and the Stars twinkle out one by one; and just as the Fairy Bells chime midnight all Elfinwood echoes to the rush and hurry of light feet;—not fairy feet, but feet of maidens from the Country under the Sun, who, on Midsummer Eve, come out to Sheneland, to inquire of the Veiled Shadow of the Future what their Fate shall be; and on this night, once in the year, she draws their lot, and shows it to them by the emblem of some one flower, weed, herb, or branch, which she lifts from the heap at her feet, and gives into their hands.

Neither Fairy Queen nor any of her Court have power to behold the face of the Veiled Shadow of the Future, but as each young maiden draws near to learn her fate, *she* sees it for a moment, but for a moment only. In that moment, however, each maiden's countenance becomes a perfect reflex of the Veiled Face: and the Fairies standing round the garlanded walls, and Fairy Queen seated on her Golden Throne in the midst, can see thereby whether there is bliss or bane, weal or woe, joy or dole, in store for each of them.

On the Midsummer Eve following the great Ball at Elfin Court, Fairy Queen and all the Court went in Procession, as usual, through the Labyrinth, from the Palace to the Enchanted Bower, and, in due order, the Fate-drawing began.

First, there came up a dark-eyed damsel, with ripe cheeks, and lovely white arms—her lips warm with laughter, and her eyes bright with Love and Happiness. She paused on the outer edge of the circle of cold air

that envired the Veiled Figure, and looked steadfastly upon her face. Then her own changed suddenly; her lips paled, her eyes stared haggardly; all the bloom faded from her cheeks; her white arms fell, then clasped themselves passionately across her breast. And so the Fairies knew that she had received a *thorn* in her heart.

The next was a pale, fair maiden, drooping and tender, with *no* lustre either in her eyes or her smile; and as she looked up in the face of the Veiled Figure her own grew blank as a shadow on the wall, and so faded back, crowned with *everlastings*, into the night.

The third was very young and timid. Scarcely dared she approach; and when she did, it was but to glance one hurried instant at the magical face, and then to fly off, blushing like the morning, with wealth of *roses, myrtles, and orange-bloom*, clasped in her arms.

She was followed by a calm, little, gipsy-eyed creature, who turned to the Veiled Figure as if she were only half-curious to learn what she could reveal; but the first glance struck her with a pang of such anguish as shivered her glassy quiet into fragments, and, passing, left her features seamed and wrinkled, and still again, like a plain where there has been earthquake. A branch of *deadly nightshade* was clutched in her lean hands.

Then appeared a cold, proud maiden, in rich and rare apparel, who beheld the Veiled Figure with a smile of defiance; but it changed into a tortured expression of pain and humiliation, as a bunch of *sour sorrel* was laid on her outstretched palm.

The next was a buxom lassie, with a countenance like May sunshine, and on her the Veiled Figure smiled, for her face bloomed into full summer as she took a

palm branch and olive branch, and her arms full of figs and grapes.

Her successor was a shrewish, sour, discontented maiden, who looked all the crosser for being stung by the *nettles*, which the Veiled Figure gave her; and her sister, who came next, and received a *bramble*, was not much pleasanter to see.

The drawing of the lots could only go on from Mid-night until the first hour of the morning; and as the last minutes flew by there was great crowding round the entrance of the Enchanted Bower, and eager hands outstretched to the Veiled Figure for their emblem of Fate. And one maiden got *thrift*, for labour; and another *mas*, for lowliness; and a third *ivy*, for constancy; and a fourth *wheat*, for usefulness. And when the Fairy Bells chimed One, all the maidens rushed away from Sheneland to their own Country under the Sun.

Then the Veiled Figure retired within the inner gate of the Enchanted Bower, and Fairy Queen's silent procession trooped back to Elfin Court.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THERE'S NO SMOKE WHERE THERE'S NO FIRE.

WHEN this solemn Festival of Midsummer Eve was over, Fairy Queen and her Court left the Palace in Elfinwood, and went away to the sea, where her Majesty had an Air-Palace, built in a beautiful wooded chine of the rocks, and garlanded all over with roses.

Now it was to this frontier of Sheneland that Spite had been exiled, and immediately the Court arrived at the Air-Palace she renewed her correspondence with her secret friends who travelled in the Royal suite. Slander, Gossip, Idlewords, and Sneer were very glad to get her letters, and Twaddle, who was considered a well-meaning, though foolish person, began to run about and say what a misunderstood and persecuted character Spite was, and to urge that she should be permitted to return to Sheneland. Finally, she got up a petition, which was numerously signed by the Court supernumeraries and others, and on a set day it was presented to Fairy Queen by Spite's friends and allies.

Her Gracious Majesty, whose character for clemency was well known, gave this petition, which Mischief, an unacknowledged daughter of Spite's, had written out, her best consideration. She also took the advice of Prince Goldheart upon it; but as she was inclined to the side of mercy, he did not press for a perpetual exile, much as his judgment would have approved it. And so the first sentence was quashed, and a Queen's Messenger was sent off to tell Spite that she might cross the border again and dwell in Sheneland, providing she kept away from Court, and held her wicked tongue in good order. To which conditions Spite readily agreed, and returned to Sheneland the same afternoon.

Those persons who had been instrumental in procuring her pardon received her with triumph; but Prince Glee and Prince Trill, the four and twenty Maids of Honour, all the Pages, the Knights-Fairy of the Royal Guard, and many others beside, were extremely sorry to hear of her return; for they knew that as soon as Spite and Mischief and their favourite companions met,



their machinations would begin. And so, of course, they did.

The very next morning, Spite, the mother of Mischief, Mischief herself, Slander, Sneer, Idle-words, Gossip, and Twaddle met together on the sea-shore not far from the Royal Landing-place. Her Majesty's yacht, a lovely pearl and pink shell, was moored at the steps in the midst of a gay little fleet, waiting to carry Fairy Queen and her Court on a summer day's sail to the Isle of Palms. None of Spite's friends had been invited to attend, for they were almost as much out of favour as herself, because of the frequent quarrels they caused amongst Fairy Queen's otherwise loyal and well-disposed subjects.

This was their way of proceeding:—Spite said ill-natured things, which Slander magnified, and Gossip repeated; then Idlewords made silly comments, Sneer looked unutterable things, and Twaddle talked *goody*, until amongst them they had kindled up a nice, brisk fire, which Mischief never allowed to die out for want of stirring.

Now Spite, though she was in reality own mother to Mischief, always pretended not to know her, and called her publicly an arrogant and presuming young person; for you must understand that Spite tried her utmost to seem respectable, and often insisted on claiming relationship with Justice and Truth, which Justice and Truth refused to acknowledge quite as peremptorily as she refused to acknowledge her own ugly and disagreeable daughter, Mischief.

Spite, and those friends of hers whom you know, had all met together by appointment on the sea-shore to watch Fairy Queen and her Court embark, and while

they were waiting they thus entered into conversation :—

“What a lamentable circumstance it is !” began Spite, to whom all the others listened with veneration ; “what a truly lamentable circumstance that Prince Glee, in the midst of his feigned passion for the Princess Trill, should have fallen into such an infatuated fondness for Clipsome, her Majesty’s new Maid of Honour ; she is but a flighty creature, and will not, I fear, prove a very desirable acquisition to our excellent Queen’s train.

“Oh ! has Prince Glee fallen in love with Clipsome ? How jealous Princess Trill will be !” cried Idlewords.

“And it is said that he pays marked attention to Touchy as well,” added Slander ; and Sneer silently affirmed the same.

“Then his behaviour is highly incorrect !” exclaimed Twaddle. “It is very well known that her Majesty disapproves of the Royal Princes admiring her Maids of Honour. His conduct is most insincere, most inconstant ! But I never had any opinion of Prince Glee. There was no stability about him ; but it is disgraceful that he should transfer his assiduities from one to another as he does. Princess Trill loved him, but I suppose he is too weak to resist the attractions of Clipsome’s fresh face. I don’t think much of Touchy ; she is always off and on with somebody.”

“Clipsome is not reported to be any great beauty,” remarked Gossip ; “neither, for that matter, is poor Princess Trill. Her voice is *her* chief attraction. But Prince Glee never was noted for elegant taste ; his country breeding clings to him still ; and I have heard it quoted as a sentiment of his, that it is *far better* to be merry and happy than to be ever so rich and great.”

"Odious things!" cried Mischief, without circumlocution: "let us make them a fire and smoke them till they are as black as Gnomes! Who are they that they should go about enjoying themselves while we are left behind to catch sand-flies?"

Spite pretended not to have heard this last exclamation, but, in fact, it was she who had suggested it to her amiable daughter; and forthwith she set about picking up sticks until she had got a bigger faggot than anybody; and when they had all gathered as many as they could carry, they brought their burdens and heaped them up on the shingle, and threw water over them, so that when they were kindled they might make a great smoke and cloud all over the sky above her Majesty's Air Palace in the beautiful wooded chine of the rocks.

Mischief was for putting a spark to the pile immediately, but Spite slyly cautioned her to wait until they were by themselves, lest they should be detected, and made a pretence of sending Gossip, Slander, Sneer, Idlewords, and Twaddle, away for more fuel, that they might not play spy and betray them. As soon as the fire were out of hearing, Spite whispered, "*Now,*" and gave a flint and steel to Mischief, who instantly struck a spark and dropped a bit of tinder on some crackling furze; and then, while Spite blew gently to get it into a blaze, Mischief cried out to their friends to come and witness a real case of spontaneous combustion!

And they all gathered round in great delight and satisfaction, Twaddle saying how sad a pity it was that Prince Glee should not know better than to have two strings to his bow, and that if he would act so inconsistently he must expect to suffer. Idlewords added that Clipsome was as much to blame as Prince Glee for

the encouragement she had given him ; and Slander suggested that in all probability Clipsome made the first advances with a view to supplant Princess Trill and vex Touchy, who always fancied people admired her, but was at the same a proud minx and easily offended. Gossip repeated that no doubt the last suggestion was the true one, Clipsome was forward and assuming, and took too much upon herself by far, though any fairy might see with half a glance that her nose was slightly turned up, that her mouth was wide, and that her eyes were gray, instead of blue.

“And as for her skin being fair,” added Twaddle, “why, her face is freckled like a turkey’s egg, and her figure is far more buxom than elegant !”

While they were still conversing in this polite and pleasant manner, Muffin and the Grand Pomp were seen coming down from the Palace towards the steps of the landing-place, with a Guard-Royal of fifty of her Majesty’s Knights-Fairy to keep the way, and a band of musicians, who hurried to their places in the Queen’s Yacht, and immediately began to tune up. Scarcely were they seated when the Queen herself, with Prince Goldheart and Prince Glee, appeared, followed by the Princesses, by Mother Dignity, the Mistress of the Robes, by the four and twenty Maids of Honour, and the four and twenty Pages, besides a miscellaneous crowd of Officials and People of Distinction then staying on a visit at the Air Palace in the beautiful wooded chine of the rocks.

Now, just as Fairy Queen and all her train passed down the shore, Mischief gave the freshly-kindled fire a stir, and suddenly a volume of ugly yellow smoke rolled over towards the royal party, and grievously

blackened Clipsome, Touchy, and Prince Glee,—blackened them so much that their pretty new clothes were all spoilt, and their faces darkened like those of the Gnomes who work in the mines.

Touchy began to cry, and Prince Glee flew into a great rage, and fumed so noisily that Muffin was obliged to give him to understand that his conduct was contrary to Court etiquette, and that if he persisted in it he would have to be removed by the guard. Clipsome, however, was a Fairy of the highest spirit, and though young, she was clever, shrewd, and daring. She shook the grime off her robes as well as she could, and said to those of her companions who were near her, "It is Spite, Mischief, and Slander who have a grudge against us because of Prince Glee and Princess Trill. But I defy them, one and all!" which words being spoken very distinctly, reached the ears of Gossip, who forthwith repeated them to her friends, who chuckled and said that Clipsome would not have been so venturesome as to defy them, had she known what an awful smoke they can make with a fire of their own kindling and tending.

Fairy Queen was so busy conversing with Prince Goldheart that this little incident did not attract her attention; but when she was seated under the awning of purple silk on board her Yacht, with all her Maids of Honour grouped around her, she suddenly caught sight of Touchy's smeared face, and then of Clipsome's still more shady one. As for Prince Glee, Muffin had prevailed on him to get out of the way, and not to show himself at all. Her Majesty looked very grave, and beckoning to Mother Dignity, her Mistress of the Robes, requested her to discover why Touchy and

Clipsome appeared in her presence in such unsightly trim.

Immediately Mother Dignity began to make inquiries, there were twenty voices ready to offer explanations. Clipsome was *so* careless, so almost *reckless* in her behaviour; she depended on her fair face and good intentions until she forgot prudence; and, in fact, though it was a matter to be much regretted, very hurtful things had been whispered against her and Prince Glee, and she was now showing the consequences of them in her begrimed robes and countenance. Touchy might be less to blame; she was sharp with her tongue, and so made enemies, who had, perhaps, revenged themselves by inventing false and malicious reports against her. Mother Dignity, on hearing all this, looked very severely on Clipsome and Touchy, and communicated the results of her inquiries to the Queen.

Princess Trill, who sat by, heard it all with grief and astonishment; and though she could not believe a word against her brave and kind Prince Glee, who had rescued her from her Aunt Spite, and the perils of Castle Craft, she let the tears roll down her lovely cheeks as she listened to Mother Dignity's report.

Now, hitherto Clipsome had been a great favourite with her Royal Mistress. Though not a Princess or a person of title, she came of a family of the very highest distinction in Sheneland; she was sprightly and well-bred, and of very gay and innocent manners. She could dance and sing better than any Fairy about Elfin Court, except Princess Trill, but Prince Glee had only extolled her skill just as Muffin and Grand Pomp might have done. As for Touchy, whatever he might have said to her was only in the way of fun, for he did not like her.

When, however, the Queen heard Mother Dignity's statement, she gazed with sorrowful severity on Clipsome, and she was bidden to approach the Royal Footstool, before which she stood, looking in the eyes of her companions, and of all the Court, the very image of a convicted culprit, for very few were clear-sighted enough to observe that the blackening of her features was not skin deep, and that she held her head erect, and looked straight, honest, and innocent, out of her bright gray eyes.

"Clipsome," said the Queen, with gentle formality, "how comes it that thou art here in such unsightly guise? Why are thy new gossamer robes all besmirched? and why is thy visage darkened so foully?"

"It is only Smoke, your Majesty," replied Clipsome, without hesitation.

The Queen was silent, but Mother Dignity repeated, with austere significance, "*Only Smoke*, Clipsome? There's no smoke where there's no fire!" And poor Clipsome's heart gave a great leap of indignation at finding herself mistrusted, and, bowing hurriedly to her Royal Mistress, she drew back quite out of sight, and spoke to none of her companions any more until they reached the Isle of Palms.

But when the Royal train landed, the Queen sent for her and said, as became her sweet majesty and gentleness—"Clipsome, I will not condemn thee unheard; my heart inclines to thee. I have ever thought thy behaviour more noble than that of Prim, Prude, and Demure, who are the chief witnesses against thee; but thy robes are much soiled, and either thou hast soiled them through carelessness thyself, or else some secret enemy has worked thee this malicious trick. I have

spoken to Prince Glee, whose word is trusty as silver refined, but he is all smirched too, and poor Touchy has not escaped. I suspect a plot meant cruelly to strike through thee at our dear Princess Trill. But be silent and patient; my officers, Pierce, Keen, Deep, and Farsight, are commissioned to search it out, and then I will hold a Court, and thou shalt be as publicly cleared, if innocent, as thou hast been publicly condemned now that appearances are so much against thee."

Clipsome's spirits still continued much depressed, but she drew a little comfort from the Queen's kind assurances. She would not share, however, in the dances and games under the Palm Trees, but went and sat down alone on the sea-shore, and sang mournfully to herself as the waves rolled in. Poor Princess Trill had likewise betaken herself to a hollow of the rocks out of sight, and was weeping in silence and solitude, when Prince Glee came down that way and found her. He was in a distracted mood, for he loved Princess Trill dearly, and she had never lifted her eyes or spoken to him once since the Queen's Yacht set sail for the Isle of Palms. He would have done or suffered anything for her sweet sake, and he was the last Fairy in all Sheneland to be false to his vows, or to seek to bring into disgrace such a pleasant Maid of Honour as Clipsome. He now drew near to Princess Trill, and knelt down at her feet; at first he scarcely dared speak, but at length he gained courage to tell her it was all a mistake, and that he had *never*—NEVER—NEVER loved anybody but herself, and as she did not repulse him, he consoled her with many kind words. And by and by, they thought they would have a little walk along the shore, and as they went, they came up with Clipsome,

and with Touchy also, who had strayed away from the rest of the Queen's Maids of Honour in a most dolorous frame of mind.

The four persecuted fairies then talked their troubles over, and Clipsome communicated to her companions in misfortune what the Queen had told her of a suspected plot; and she told them that the Queen, Deep, and Farsight having been sent to the castle to look out the conspiracy. On that, Princess Trill said, "There be a plot, my Aunt Spite is at the bottom of it," and Prince Glee immediately cheered up, saying that all would come right in the end, and that justice never failed to triumph in the long run.

Meanwhile the twenty Maids of Honour, who were left with her majesty, danced with the Pages under the Palm Trees, and all the Court looked on; and at noon there was a collation of sweets, cakes, and fruit; after which, there was more dancing, and some merry games of leap-frog and hop-scotch, in which Muffin and the Grand Pomp covered themselves with glory; and as the sun went round to the west, the Royal train returned to the Queen's Yacht, and sailed away from the Isle of Palms to Sheneland, and the Air Palace in the beautiful wooded chine of the rocks.

As the fleet approached the shore, Farsight being on the watch, saw thick black and yellow rolling clouds of smoke rising from a fire kindled on the beach, which darkened all the sky; next he discerned the seven wicked fairies flitting about it, and one in particular, continually poking and stirring the smouldering pile, while the others gathered more fuel and flung it on in haste. He called instantly to Pierce, Kee, and offering them his telescope by tu





Aunt Spite in the custody of Pierce, Deep, and Keen. P. 191.

know whether they agreed with him, that those fairies were Spite, the mother of Mischief, Mischief herself, Slander, Sneer, Gossip, Idlewords, and Twaddle; and as they all cried, "Yes," Farsight shut up his telescope, and said—"The awful plot is discovered! Those miscreants kindled the fire, which has so shamefully blackened our merry Prince Glee, and the two lovely Maids of Honour, Clipsome and Touchy. Their object is to sow discord between Prince Glee and Princess Trill,—to separate them, and destroy their happiness!"

The Queen was instantly apprised of the detection of the infamous conspiracy, and the moment the Royal Yacht touched the shore, the four officers, with a select company of Guards, rushed along the shore to the capture of the criminals. Spite saw them coming first, and perceiving no chance of escape, she determined to rely on her sanctity and respectability, put a fair face on the matter, and walked stately to meet them, while Mischief sat laughing and poking amongst the sticks to keep them ablaze; but Slander, Sneer, Gossip, Idlewords, and Twaddle were struck with such a panic of fear that they tried to run off and get away, but Lightfoot, Swiftfoot, and Holdfast were after them in a moment, and they were soon caught and secured. Their arms were pinioned, and their ankles strapped, so that they could only take little steps, and they were thus ignominiously led away to the Grand Justice Hall, adjoining Fairy Queen's Air Palace, in the wooded chine of the rocks. Spite, by reason of her boasted high birth and fine connexions, was permitted to walk unbound, with Pierce and Deep on either side and Keen behind her; and in those circumstances she looked a very miserable little Spite, and would hardly have been known for the lean

old fairy with the fern train, and enormous long legs, who ventured to go to Elfin Court Ball with the assumption of royal state. Farsight took charge of Mischief, who had not attempted flight, because she never cared for the consequences of what she had done half so much as she enjoyed doing it.

When the Guards arrived with their prisoners, the Grand Hall of Justice was crowded with everybody then at Court. Fairy Queen was seated on her Golden Throne, with Prince Goldheart beside her, and Judge Grim on her left hand. Prince Glee and the two Maids of Honour were accommodated with stools on the second step of the Dais, and Princess Trill was supported by Mother Dignity in the background.

The seven prisoners, Spite, Mischief, Slander, Sneer, Gossip, Idlewords, and Twaddle, were ordered to mount upon the platform of Shame, that they might be seen of all the Court, and the Grand Pomp having proclaimed silence, Specs, the Public Accuser, read the indictment, which charged them with having gathered fuel, piled it up in a stack, kindled it into a blaze, and then fanned up a great fire on the shores of Sheneland, in the wicked design of blackening three of Fairy Queen's loyal subjects: to wit, Prince Glee and the fair Maids of Honour, Clipsome and Touchy. Further, the indictment charged them with an attempt to make dissension between true lovers, which attempt was the most aggravated form of High Treason recognised by the laws of Sheneland, and deserving of the punishment of *Death*.

Then did all the seven prisoners shake in their shoes most terribly. But they were permitted to speak in their own defence, and six of them—namely, Spite, Slander, Sneer, Gossip, Idlewords, and Twaddle, pleaded

not guilty. Spite, Slander, Sneer, and Gossip contented themselves with a flat denial of the crime imputed to them; but Idlewords rambled in her talk, and threw great discredit on their plea; and Twaddle, who was always a weak-minded fairy, lost herself in a maze of moral aphorisms, by means of which she contradicted herself repeatedly, and all but confessed her guilt, by admitting that she had assisted in what she then considered to be a righteous and necessary piece of work, though, now that she was made sensible of her error, she was eager to repent and amend her ways for the future. Everybody in Court laughed at Twaddle's hypocritical virtue, but when Lawyers Double and Twist cross-examined her, she fell into a terrible fright and let them delude her into admitting herself guilty of a hundred crimes which ought in reality to have been charged on Spite and Slander.

The trial was long, careful, and extremely interesting, and the accusation was fully brought home to all the seven prisoners. All had helped to collect fuel, but it was proved that Spite had suggested the making of the fire to Mischief, and that Mischief had been afterwards the most diligent in keeping it up. The alleged spontaneous combustion was completely negated by the finding of a flint, steel, and tinder-box in Spite's pocket. Then Mischief, perceiving that they were found out and sure to be punished, laughed and said, audaciously, "I don't care, it was very good fun while it lasted! We *did* make the fire, and Spite played bellows, and blew it up her own self, let her deny it as long as she likes!"

On this Spite, who had assumed an air of scornful and persecuted virtue, became aware that if she did not

make a vigorous effort, her newly-gained reputation for sanctity and respectability would soon be gone; so turning upon Mischief, she squeaked out indignantly—
“You most arrogant, flippant, and feeble-minded minx, how dare you support the false accusations against me whom *you* never saw in your life before?”

But Mischief only laughed in her face, and Judge Grim stood up, and, in a voice that shook the Grand Justice Hall to its foundations, he pronounced the following sentences against the seven prisoners on the platform of Shame. Thus he spoke:—

“Spite, thou art the Mother of Mischief, and must suffer for the evil training thou hast given her, as well as for thy own misdeeds. Her Majesty graciously wills that the punishment of death be remitted, since the machinations of which thou wert the spring have failed to disunite the true lovers, Prince Glee and Princess Trill; therefore, the sentence of the Court upon thee is, that thy *Face be painted Black*, that all the loyal people of Sheneland may, henceforward, know thee for what thou art, and avoid thy company. Mischief will be *whippca*, for she is young, and may mend. Slander will have *her tongue slit*. Sneer will have *her lips burned*. Gossip, Idlewords, and Twaddle will have *their mouths stopped*. Justice is satisfied! Guards! remove the prisoners to the Stools of Penance. Brush, Scourge, Sword, Coal, and Tow, execute the sentence of the Court!”

And Fairy Queen having withdrawn with all the ladies of her Court, in the midst of a great clamour it was done.

Spite squeaked, Mischief shrieked, Slander yelled, and Sneer roared again; but Gossip, Idlewords, and

Twaddle maintained a most beautiful silence—thankful, no doubt, to have escaped the severe punishment of their accomplices.

And in the evening, when the criminals had been disposed of, there was a Grand Supper, and a Ball after it, to celebrate the reconciliation of Prince Glee and Princess Trill, who sang and danced a fandango together before all the Court.

Clipsome and Touchy were also as gay as Maids of Honour could be; Clipsome danced with Frolic, and Touchy danced with Dump; and Mother Dignity, who had her eye upon them throughout the evening, said they behaved beautifully; but Prim, Prude, and Demure had a long lecture before they went to bed for confabulating in corners with Wrinkle, Whisper, and Tippet,—a pastime which was expressly forbidden to the Maids of Honour by the Queen herself.

You will hear by and by what further adventures happened to Prince Glee and Princess Trill; but first I must tell you the awful warning that befell Pickle, Prig, and Slumph, three very small Fairies who were related to Spite, and had been playfellows of Mischief, many of whose naughty ways they had learned much to their sorrow, as you will soon see.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE AWFUL WARNING OF PICKLE, PRIG, AND SLUMPH.

THE following morning, when Fairy Queen issued forth from her bower at the east end of the Air Palace in the wooded chine of the rocks, she was observed by all the Court to be wearing a sad countenance and dark clothing. Immediately the four and twenty Maids of Honour and the four and twenty Pages looked solemn too, and the great dignitaries imitated the proper example, and became as intensely grievous as Fairies without a grief could be.

Mother Dignity walked silently behind her Royal Mistress, who entered the Hall of Justice, and having seated herself upon her Golden Throne, beckoned to Muffin, the Master of the Ceremonies, to approach. The official drew near with deep respect, to await her commands.

"Let all the Youth of Elfin Land be summoned and let the Hall of Justice be cleared of all the elders," said her Majesty.

And immediately it was done, and the seats were crowded with eager little Fairies, all wondering what fine entertainment was in store for them, and staring at the Queen on her Golden Throne, with only Mother Dignity behind her, and Muffin waiting for further orders.

Then spoke her Majesty again. "Call hither Professors Birch, Twig, Cane, and Ferule." And those sour ushers appeared forthwith.

“Call also Professors Prize, Holiday, Treat, and Jolly,” added the Queen; and those benign personages entered.

“Let the Elf Transformation appear;” and instantly, from nobody knew where, there came a tall figure all in white, carrying a wand in one hand, and a great bag in the other.

“Summon Fancy, the great Court Moralist and Story Teller.” And Fancy entered, looking clear and buoyant, and took the elevated seat which Muffin pointed out to him near the Golden Throne.

Things now began to wear a very serious aspect indeed, and many of the young fairies who crowded the benches round the Hall of Justice felt exceedingly disappointed, because there was no mention of Fun at all, and neither Play nor Pantomime was in request. The four benign professors all had their hands in their pockets, but the four sour professors had their implements of office ready for service tightly embraced under the left arm.

“Bring in Pickle, Prig, and Slumph,” said her Majesty. And those three miserable little dogs of fairies were brought in.

“Set them up on the platform of Shame,” was the next royal command; and Muffin set them up one by one, and there they had to stand and be looked at for ten minutes, after which they were perched on a high bench, and made to sit down.

What ugly little wretches they were! All the youth in the Hall recognised them as their naughtiest companions, with whom they were constantly being forbidden to play. Pickle looked quite scared, but impudent too, as if he meant to brave out whatever might

happen to him ; Prig tucked his legs under the seat and peeped about with a cowardly dishonesty in his little eyes ; and Slumph sat all in a heap and all in a quake, like a mould of ill-made jelly. When they had been thus exhibited for some time before the gaze of the multitude, her Majesty again spoke in the midst of the profoundest silence.

“You are all here assembled to witness the awful warning about to be administered to Pickle, Prig, and Slumph,” said she, solemnly. “I pray you, young Fairies, take heed lest you also come into their miserable case. This is their crime. They have robbed the nests of birds, they have stoned and otherwise maltreated harmless frogs, toads, and other reptiles ; they have destroyed insects, and in every way made themselves amenable to severe discipline. They will now listen to a Parable which Fancy, my Moralist, will relate, and afterwards they will be conducted to the private residence of Professor Birch, to whom I give it in charge to cure them of their infamous propensities.”

Then Pickle, Prig, and Slumph, anticipating their awful fate, each put a finger in his mouth and began to cry ; but Muffin soon stopped the noise, and then Fancy, the Court Moralist and Story Teller, related the strange Parable of the “Ugliest Cat in Sheneland.”

THE UGLIEST CAT IN SHENELAND.

“You are going to hear the story of the Ugliest Cat in Sheneland.

“It was a black cat, with spiteful yellow eyes, a mean, sharp tail, a back ridged like a saw, and a ‘Miow, Mioo,’ that made every other creature in Elfin Wood run into hiding as soon as they heard it. The name of this Ugly

Cat was Cruel ; and he was so big and so strong, that he could catch and kill every other cat he met, besides hares, rabbits, water-rats, shrew-mice, and all kinds of birds that haunted the forest.

“ His method of catching the birds was very ingenious and subtle. He would lie down on the grass under a tree, pretending to doze ; and then he would begin to sing, ‘ Purr, purr, ’ so long and loud, that the feathered things, full of curiosity, came and peeped shyly down at him through the leaves. But very few of them did it with impunity : for when the cat caught them looking, he fixed them with his great yellow eyes, until they began to tremble all over, then to turn giddy and faint, and the next minute they would drop into Cruel’s jaws, as if they had been shot ; when he ate them up, quills, claws, beaks, feathers, and all.

“ But Cruel was not the most enviable person in Elfin Wood ; for he had one very powerful enemy named Worry, and it had been foretold to Cruel that whenever and wherever Worry met him, he must expect to receive the just punishment of his numerous crimes ; and this prophecy weighed heavily on Cruel’s mind, because he was aware that he might meet Worry any day. Worry was a famous dog, Captain of Fairy Queen’s Kennels, and the beginning of the enmity between him and Cruel was, that Cruel had killed many promising young members of Worry’s family when they were taking morning airings, without their mothers, in the beautiful glades of Elfin Wood.

“ But that took place before Cruel became a cat. He was then a squat little boy, the only son of some decent poor people who kept one of the gates of Fairy Queen’s Hunting Palace, in the forest ; but they were so foolishly

fond of him that they never corrected any of his naughty ways, or debarred him from any amusement in which he chose to delight himself. One of his earliest pleasures was to sit on the doorstep of his father's and mother's house, and grin and make frightful faces at the neighbours' children as they went by to school, until some of them were so terrified that they ran a mile round by another way rather than pass the place where Cruel waited for them.

“There were two little ones, however, a brother and sister, named Courage and Kindness, who walked always hand in hand, and took no notice of him; they even said openly that they were not afraid of him: he might twist his face into as many ugly shapes as he liked, but he could not harm them; but Fairy Echo having carried this to Cruel's ears, he laughed maliciously, and cried out, ‘Can't I hurt them? I'll try, and then they'll know.’

“So he gathered a heap of stones and kept them secret, and the next morning he hid himself behind the garden-hedge, and when Courage and Kindness appeared coming through the forest on their way to school, he began to pelt them until he struck Kindness on the neck, and made her cry; but Courage immediately dashed at Cruel and dragged him out of his hiding-place, beating him unmercifully, and then kicking him away in contempt, and Cruel, who had not expected this prompt punishment, was thankful to slink away with every bone in his body full of aches and pains.

“That lesson ought to have been enough for him, but it was not; for though he never dared to molest Courage and Kindness, or any of their little companions, again he thought he should be quite safe and enjoy it almost

as well if he might vex and torture the poor dumb creatures that traversed the forest ; and his foolish parents assured him that there was no harm in that, and, indeed, seemed to consider it a mark of a brave and bold spirit rather than otherwise. Thus upheld in his wickedness, Cruel, though a thorough coward at heart, became more and more reckless and venturesome, until every living thing smaller than himself, and with a sense of fear, shrank from the sight of him.

“ Now just at this time Dopple, a distinguished lady of the family of Worry at the Queen’s Kennels, had a beautiful family of six little black puppies. They were all round, fat, sleek, and shining like buttered black balls, and Dopple was exceedingly fond and proud of them. It was quite a pleasure to see with what benevolence she permitted them to tumble and gambol about her dignified person. Worry took also an immense interest in them, and it was generally allowed in the Queen’s Kennels that Dopple’s children were the handsomest that had been born there for many generations. They were a high spirited, frolicsome group of little fellows, and not always so obedient as they might have been—indeed, it was remembered after their sad disaster by many of Dopple’s friends, that she had said they were almost too much for her, and that her mind was filled with anxiety as to what they would turn out, when Whip, the huntsman, took them in hand to train. And Dopple was much sympathised with on this account, especially by such of her acquaintance as had known what it was to bring up young families.

“ Cruel had several times seen the six black puppies going out for a walk with their mother, but under those circumstances he was particularly careful not to meddle

with them, for had he been so ill-advised as to attempt it, Mistress Dopples would very soon have made no bones of Master Cruel, and he knew it. But while spying from a distance he made up his mind what he would do the first time he saw them set off for an excursion into the forest unprotected by their mother.

“The opportunity he watched for happened but too soon. One hapless morning when Dopples's back was turned, Wilful and Presto, the two sprightliest of the puppies, gambolled off and away before she knew that they were missing. The naughty little dogs were anxious to see the world by themselves, and they ran till they were out of breath and ought of sight, lest their mother should discover their absence and overtake them before they could make good their escape. The first persons they met were Courage and Kindness on their way to school, and they had a capital game at play with them, and afterwards they trotted on merrily until they came to the house of Cruel's father and mother. They had never heard of Cruel in their lives, and so when they saw a little squat boy sitting on the doorstep, cooling his bowl of bread and milk, they peeped at him through the gate, wagged their stumpy tails, and said to each other how *nice* milk was when *puppies* were thirsty.

“Cruel heard the remark, and inviting them in, he persuaded them to take a lap at his breakfast, which, as it was boiling hot, scalded their tongues and made them squeal with pain. But Cruel only laughed; and the sight of their suffering set him on doing something worse. Catching Presto by the nape of his neck, he flung him up into the air and let him fall upon the stones, where he gave but one feeble moan and died. Wilful ran to his poor little brother, whining and barking, and

then Cruel pelted him until he was dead too; after that he threw them over the gate into the dusty road, and there Courage and Kindness found their pretty playfellows lying when they came home from school.

“‘It is that wicked Cruel who has killed them,’ said Kindness, weeping, as she took them up; ‘dear old Dapple will be heartbroken!’

“And she carried them to the Queen’s Kennels, and when Whip saw them he grieved over them, buried them, and comforted their mother; after which he cut a handsome bunch of knotty birch, and started at a great pace to the house of Cruel’s father and mother, where he found Cruel just being put to bed by his foolish, fond parents. The moment Cruel saw Whip approaching with that ominous bunch of knotty birch-twigs in his hand, he guessed what was going to befall him, and begged his mother to hide him in the cupboard; but Whip was too quick for him, and before Cruel had time to howl once, the huntsman had his head under his arm, and was giving him such a trimming as the little wretch remembered dolorously whenever he sat down on the doorstep to eat his breakfast, for more than a month after. And during that space of time he behaved rather better, but as soon as he had forgotten the smart he said he didn’t care, and that he would serve, exactly in the same way as he had served Presto and Wilful, all Dapple’s other children if they fell in his way. And he did; one after another he succeeded in killing all Dapple’s six beautiful puppies, and the whole kennel went into mourning for them.

“Then Worry showed his teeth, and growled out

threats of deadly vengeance ; and after reflecting and consulting about it for some time, Dopple and he set off to find the famous Elf Transformation ; having discovered her abode, they laid their piteous case before her, and asked what she could do to help them.

“ ‘ I can change Cruel into the Ugliest Cat in all Sheneland,’ replied she.

“ ‘ That is excellent !’ growled Worry. ‘ Change Cruel into the Ugliest Cat in all Sheneland, and the first time I see him I ’ll kill him !’

“ And Dopple and Worry ran home to their kennel very well contented.

“ The next day Elf Transformation came down to Elfin Wood, to the house where Cruel’s father and mother lived, and there sat Cruel on the doorstep, cooling his bowl of bread and milk, and waiting, as usual, until something came by that he could hurt. Elf Transformation drew quite near, and looked at him sharply ; then, making the complimentary remark that he could not well be more frightful than he was, she twitched out a tuft of his red hair, and immediately he became the Ugliest Cat in all Sheneland !

“ When his parents returned home, after their day’s work, Cruel was still sitting on the doorstep ; but he was now washing his face with his paw, and, of course, they did not know him for their son ; but they hated cats, particularly ugly cats ; so they drove him away with many kicks and hard blows ; and even his mother threw a broom after him, to frighten him further off. So he was obliged to become a wild cat in Elfin Wood, where he was day and night exposed to be caught in traps, to be shot by Whip, or to be devoured by Worry and his friends. For ever so long, however, he contrived

to exist, though very miserably ; but, at the same time, he was the terror of the forest by reason of his thefts and murders.

“ There was a world of talk about him in the Queen’s Kennels every evening after supper, and, at last, a grand hunting match was arranged by the whole pack, to take place on a particular day, when a handsome reward was to be given to any dog who would catch and kill Cruel. Worry licked his chaps, and said the reward was as good as in his dish already ; and bade Dopple make her mind easy, for he would never come back to kennel again while there was as much fluff left of Cruel as would stuff a bee’s pillow.

“ And the great day of the Hunt arrived, but it had been kept so snug that Cruel had not heard a single whisper of it. He was sunning himself in a soft mossy nook, and digesting a full breakfast of young rabbits, when all at once he heard a horn sound, then the cry of the dogs, and the patter, patter, patter of their feet in the glade, coming up very fast indeed. He was awake in an instant, and, scouring away like the wind, his mean tail brandished spike-wise, and his fur standing on end all over him ; but Worry was on his scent, and though he had a good start, Cruel lost ground at every stride, and finally was brought to bay on a space where there was no tree for him to run up ; and though he hissed, and swore, and spit, and used both claws and teeth, Worry gripped him by the back and shook the life out of him in no time.

“ Then the other dogs ate him up, all but two hairs of his whiskers, and a bit of fluff, which Worry carried home to Dopple, as an assurance that her children’s destroyer was no more.

“And that was the deserved end of Cruel, the Ugliest Cat in all Sheneland.”

As soon as Fancy, the Court Moralist and Story Teller, had finished his Parable, the Hall of Justice rang from one end to the other with the clapping of little fairy hands, and cries of “Serve him right! Serve him right!” And as soon as the clamour had subsided, Pickle, Prig, and Slumph were delivered over into the custody of Professor Birch, who immediately conducted them to his private residence, and initiated them into the mysteries of his discipline, by which cruelty, craft, and insensibility were gradually eradicated from the fairy temper.

When they had disappeared, Muffin, by the Queen's command, dismissed the assemblage to play, and to partake of a refecton in the open air, after which the young fairies returned home, powerfully edified and impressed by all they had seen and heard.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE REWARD OF COURAGE AND KINDNESS.

FAIRY QUEEN was even more ready to give treats to good little Fairies, than she was to grant proper correction to naughty little Fairies; so the day after the Awful Warning of Pickle, Prig, and Slumph, she consulted with Mother Dignity and Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, as to what entertainment should be provided for Courage and Kindness, and their favourite companions.

Mother Dignity suggested that they should go to

bed an hour earlier than usual by way of treat ; and Muffin said, would it please them, did her Majesty think, to perform double dues of lessons? Her Majesty thought *not*, and called Fancy, the Court Moralist and Story Teller, into counsel.

Fancy would have been glad to give his Royal Mistress's little guests a new Pantomime ; but as they were going to receive a public reward, he was of opinion that something more solid and improving should be set before them. What did her Majesty think of having Tuf-longbo, the great traveller of Sheneland, up to Court, to relate his wonderful adventures in the country of the Alepivi?

Fancy's suggestion was excellent—was everything that could be desired! Tuf-longbo would be a capital treat, no doubt!

Now, Tuf-longbo had returned to Elfin Court, after making remarkable discoveries in the country of the Alepivi, and had been welcomed with a complete ovation. His Royal Mistress immediately appointed him State Geographer and Astronomer, and conferred upon him the dignified order of Complacency, and the Grand Cross of Vanity, which were the two highest and pleasantest distinctions that she had it in her power to bestow. Also, she was graciously pleased to promise him that she would soon name a day when he might recite his marvellous adventures before herself and all Elfin Court, in full state assembled ; so when Fancy suggested that the good little people would like to hear him also, the Grand Pomp was immediately ordered to proclaim the entertainment with the sound of trumpets, as one that would combine valuable instruction with much amusement.

When the appointed time arrived, the State Hall of the Air Palace was brilliantly lighted up, and in a few minutes after the doors were opened, it was crowded in every part, except on the Dais which was reserved for the Queen and the Court, and a select number of little Fairies, especially pointed out by Professor Prize as worthy of that honourable distinction. A small elevated pulpit was reserved for Tuflongbo, and a little gallery in the roof was appropriated to the Royal Society of Wiseacres of Sheneland, most of whom had combined, through envy and jealousy of the honours paid him, not to believe a word Tuflongbo might say, even before he opened his mouth. Tippet and Wink had made interest to be received amongst this choice knot of bright and amiable spirits, and as soon as Tuflongbo appeared on the platform, smirking and bowing to Fairy Queen and the Court right and left, Tippet could not forbear whispering that the fellow was a conceited, fantastical idiot ; in which remarkable expression of opinion most of the Royal Society of Wiseacres cordially acquiesced.

Tuflongbo was a little wiry brown fellow with no hair on his head but a great deal on his chin. His countenance showed that internally he was fortified with much buckram, and his dress was as striking as it was possible to be ; but then he had had surprising adventures, and therefore could claim a right to be distinguished by the vulgar eye as well as by the discerning mind ; and if he had not worn a cloak of peacock's eyes, who would have known him at a glance, as they did now, to be the celebrated person he was ? He wore over the cloak the ribbon of the Order of Complacency, and the Grand Cross of Vanity decorated his breast.





The Great Tufongbo received at Elfin Court by Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies. P. 308

Fairy Queen being comfortably settled, with Mother Dignity and her Maids of Honour grouped around her, Muffin gave the Signal of Attention, and Tuflongbo immediately opened his narrative as follows, dispensing with all nervousness and all circumlocution.

THE ADVENTURES OF TUFLONGBO, RELATED BY
HIMSELF.

“When your Fairy Majesty last graciously gave me leave of absence from Elfin Court, you were pleased to express a desire to learn what became of the Old Moons when they disappeared from our firmament. Your Majesty’s curiosity was most laudable, and also most gratifying to me as a fervent disciple of science. Previous astronomers have made diligent inquiries in that direction, but I need hardly say with what a total failure of success. The honour and glory of solving this important problem, and making an immortal discovery, was reserved for ME!”

And then Tuflongbo drew himself up, expanded his little chest, and glanced triumphantly at the Royal Society of Wiseacres in the Gallery.

“It was reserved for ME,” he repeated, “to add another and a glorious chapter to the annals of Fairy Science, and to bring this tremendous and ancient mystery to a safe and unimpeachable solution. It is extremely gratifying to me, after my many perils, to lay such a precious page of knowledge before the assembled beauty, wit, learning, and youth of Sheneland, and especially before your Majesty, to whose service it is equally my pride and my pleasure to dedicate every waking moment of my existence. (Loud applause.)

“Perhaps your Majesty may graciously be pleased to

remember that when I set out on my last journey of exploration I took the South road through Sheneland, intending to pass by the Country of the Gnomes, who work in the Mines, but I was diverted from my original intention by an unforeseen accident; and leaving that route, I turned off to the West, and travelled onward until I came to World's End, which is bounded by a lofty wall of stone and bricks. When I saw this obstacle my heart almost failed me, (so short-sighted are we,) though at that very moment I was on the verge of my great discovery, and at the dawn of the proudest day of my life! (Great applause.)

“Over this wall there grew a stout trailing plant, with a five-peaked glossy leaf, and clusters of dark purple berries; and up this I climbed arduously until I had gained the summit, and through tears of joy beheld the wonders of the strange country beyond. As my vision cleared, imagine my ecstasy—imagine my overwhelming delight at discerning, in the plain immediately below me, a vast body of men in blue aprons, cutting up the Old Moons and making Stars of them!”

Here Tuflongbo paused, utterly overcome by his recollections, and the tremendous applause that ensued lasted several minutes, interspersed with ironical cheers from the Wiseacres' Gallery. Tuflongbo bowed to them with his hand on his heart, and when the tumult subsided he continued his narrative.

“The joy of this discovery was greater than words can express. Here was a question, which had agitated scientific circles for years, set at rest for ever! Here was a convincing proof of the Universal Economy of Nature! What a beautiful simplicity is there in the explanation of this antique puzzle! A band of men in

blue aprons cutting up the Old Moons and making Stars of them! I was so lost in wonder and admiration that I remained for some hours spell-bound, and watching the process of conversion undiscovered; but at length the Chief Polisher threw back his head, opened his mouth in a wide yawn, and I caught his eye. The only course left for me to pursue was to bow and introduce myself, which civility he received with the utmost politeness; and after presenting my credentials as the State Traveller of Sheneland, he became still more courteous, and invited me to make a stay at his house, but I excused myself as having further discoveries to make, and a long journey still before me. (Applause.)

“ This highly satisfactory commencement to my travels filled me with new courage to encounter my difficulties, and I made great and rapid progress, until one evening when I arrived on the shores of a vast sea, quite unknown to geographers, and upon which no sail was discernible. My heart sank before this emergency. I paced the shore for hours, cogitating on the apparent impossibility of traversing this immense body of water, but at length I was relieved by seeing approach a tall old man with a bundle of nets in his arms. I began to question him concerning the navigation of this strange sea—its tides, reefs, shoals, and opposite shores. He did not seem to understand any inquiry but the last, and to that he replied, that if I crossed the sea, I should be immediately in the country of the Alepivi. (Applause.)

“ ‘ But how cross it?’ I asked him.

“ ‘ Easily. It is but three sights over,’ he replied, emphatically.

“ ‘ *But three sights over?*’ I repeated. ‘ Will you be

pleased to explain the meaning of that expression !'

"It is only this :—Stand on the shore, look to the horizon, and jump—that is *one* sight. Pause, look, and jump again—that is *two* sights. Pause, look, and jump again—that is *three* sights. And behold you landed in the country of the Alepivi !'

"But how about *sinking* ?' I suggested.

"The water is so buoyant that a little fellow like you cannot sink,' was his assurance.

"*Little fellow !* there you have hit another of my difficulties,' said I. 'How can I jump as far as I can see? I can see a thousand miles at least.'

"Nothing simpler. Watch me, and instantly you will be able to do it. I will go across to the country of the Alepivi and back again in the twinkling of an eyelash.'

"So said, so done! Without further preface, he leaped to the horizon ; the second spring carried him out of sight ; but before I had time to cry, 'How marvellous !' he was again standing beside me, perfectly cool and unfatigued. I then shook hands with him, thanked him for his courteous instructions, and took my spring successfully,—once, twice, thrice, and found myself safely landed on the snow-white shores of the Country of the Alepivi !"

At this point of Tuflongbo's narrative the applause became tumultuous, and the Royal Society of Wisacres in the Gallery were reduced to a most crestfallen silence, while a little boy from the Country under the Sun, who was stated to be on a visit to Professor Holiday, shouted tremendously—"My stars ! but that beats the Electric Telegraph hollow !"



A Traveller crossing the Sea to the Shores of Apleyvi.



Tuflongbo refreshed himself with a sip of negus, and after a short pause resumed the story of his great adventures.

“Yes—those three remarkable springs landed me sound in wind and limb on the snow-white shores of the Country of the Alepivi, into which, before me, no traveller had ever gained admittance. My first impression of it was that there was a great dearth of inhabitants; but, in fact, the Alepivi had received warning of the coming of a powerful and distinguished stranger, and had retreated to their fortified towns and villages, leaving the open country quite deserted. I therefore had an opportunity of making my earliest researches without impediment; and first I took notice of a beautiful tree, on the singular fruit of which I supped delightfully.

“This fruit was large and oval in shape, the exterior of it being a crisp and delicate brown, light as puff. On breaking through this crust, I found the interior to be a luscious, sweet, juicy compound, most acceptable to the palate, and most fragrant to the organs of smell. This fruit grew in handsome clusters of four at the end of each branch, and some trees I observed to be so heavily laden with it as to be almost bent to the ground. I afterwards learnt that it formed the staple food of the Alepivi, and I have since been led into a conjecture that their name may be derived from the name of this fruit; but this is rather a question for Philologists than for your Gracious Majesty’s State Geographer and Astronomer.”

This part of Tuflongbo’s narrative had been received by Fairy Queen, by all the Court, by all the little fairies, by the boy from the Country under the Sun, who was

staying with Professor Holiday, and even by the Wise-acres' Gallery, with the profoundest silence and the deepest interest; and when the great traveller paused to refresh himself with another sip of negus, a discussion arose as to the practicability of naturalising this charming fruit of the Alepivi in Sheneland. Her Majesty deigned to consult Tuflongbo herself, and everybody was thrown into ecstasy when he replied that he had foreseen his Royal Mistress's wish, and had brought home abundance of cuttings of the wonderful tree; and not only cuttings, but a hamper of the finest and best-ripened fruits, upon which he had the honour of inviting her Majesty with all her Court, and the youthful members of his audience, to sup, after he had finished the recital of all his most remarkable adventures and discoveries. He then went on, his hearers being in the highest good-humour at the prospect of such an excellent supper; and Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, stole slyly out to put the clock on.

"After I had eaten of this refreshing fruit," Tuflongbo proceeded, "a drowsiness overcame me, and lying down under the tree from whose branches I had plucked it, I enjoyed a long and refreshing slumber. I slept until the morning, and then rose, determined at once vigorously to pursue my researches into the ways and customs of the singular tribe of the Alepivi. And first I took my note and sketch-books, which I shall have the greatest pride and pleasure in submitting to your Majesty at a convenient time, and, pencil in hand, I proceeded to thread my way through mazy and fruitful groves, until I came suddenly upon a cluster of circular straw huts, from which issued swarms upon swarms of the Alepivi, all humming and buzzing incoherently,

They were a little and insignificant people to behold, but they were blessed with a vast sense of their own importance, and I was advised to maintain a respectful distance between myself and their dwellings, lest I should give offence and draw upon me their wrath if I approached inquisitively near. My arrival was plainly regarded as an intrusion; but as it behoved me to secure their good-will, or to fail in the chief objects of my mission, I drew softly near, extending towards them a branch covered with large white blossoms, in token of amity. After a few moments of hesitation and discussion, some of the chief Alepivi flew upon the branch, and thrust their round little brown heads into the cups of the flowers; after which the buzz of anger subsided, and they opened the conversation in the most friendly manner.

“I now discovered that this singular people wore little wings under their shoulders, and presently I added to my stock of knowledge the fact that they were furnished with a deadly weapon with which they promptly avenged every insult, and, on occasion, executed unanimously any obnoxious member of their own tribes who had degraded himself by losing or making away with his weapon. I found amongst them later many admirable customs worthy of being introduced into Sheneland, and came to the final conclusion that they were a people to be respected, and one with whom our nation might advantageously form alliances.

“When, therefore, a Chief Senator of the tribe inquired of me: ‘What brings the great Traveller Tuflongbo into the humble country of the Alepivi?’ I answered, ‘The pursuit of knowledge, and the desire to extend our commerce,’ being ever eager to extend your Ma-

jesty's influence in foreign lands. But my last remark was met with some indignation :

“‘The Aplepivi do not engage in commerce, they are an aristocratic people,’ said the Chief Senator, with a great hauteur. ‘They are also warlike and wealthy, and they have quite enough to do to protect the rich stores they possess against being pillaged by bands of robbers from the Country under the Sun, who come periodically into our towns and villages, with a great brazen sound of instruments which stuns us into helplessness ; while we are in that state they rifle our dwellings, and leave them as bare as a field over which a flight of locusts has passed. Never have we formed any treaty yet which has not turned ultimately to our loss and disadvantage.’

“He then flew away, and I began to fear my embassy would come to nought, when a shrewd and experienced councillor, who had listened and reflected while the Senator addressed me, now spoke and said,—

“‘Let us hear a little more about it, Tuflongbo. What can you Sheneland folk give the Aplepivi in return for fruit, and for their housed store, which is golden honey?’

“‘We can give you plains of purple heather, and fields of bean-blossom,’ I replied. ‘Send over a colony of your people to behold the fertility of our land : only give me now certain specimens of your products to take to Fairy Queen at Elfin Court, and I will use my best persuasions to gain for them permission to settle on the Downs of Sheneland, when they can pay tribute in kind.’

“And immediately the great Parliament of the Aplepivi was convened to take the matter into consideration, and after such a buzzing as drowned my voice com-

pletely, it was agreed that I should receive one hundred and twenty pots of the finest honey, and twelve score hampers of fruit of Aplepivi, all of which await your Majesty, the Court, and the little people, on the supper-table at this moment ; for I perceive that the clock is on the stroke of nine, and that Muffin has yawned thrice as a sign that there has been talk enough."

Muffin, in fact, had put the clock on an hour.

And so Tuflongbo, who was a fellow of infinite tact, brought his narrative to a close, and everybody went in to supper except the occupants of the Wiseacres' Gallery, who were not invited. They hovered about the court, and tried to persuade each other that there was nothing but bubbles in all Tuflongbo had said ; but when they saw dish after dish of the wonderful fruit of the Aplepivi carried into the supper-hall, and pot after pot of honey, with new bread and bowls of cream, their appetites became keen, and they wished that, if they *were* bubbles, they had the chance of trying the flavour of them.

At last they grew so hungry that they got all about the door, peeping in at the crevices and keyhole, and once, when it was opened to call for more honey, and more cream, and more new bread, and more fruit of Aplepivi, one of the fattest of the Wiseacres fell in with a crash, and Tuflongbo, who was a good-natured fellow in the main, looking round, saw all the clever hungry faces, and invited them in to supper. And everybody had as much as he could eat, both of honey and fruit of Aplepivi, and new bread and delicious cream, and Tuf-longbo became from that time forth one of the most popular fairies in Sheneland.

Moreover, the Great Court Doctor Pille stated as his professional opinion that the new fruit and the golden honey which Tuflongbo had introduced into Sheneland, were wholesome articles of food, especially for the younger fairies; and that he recommended the wonderful fruit of the Aplepivi to be served at least twice a week in the season, as a tea to rice-pudding, sago, and tapioca, which had hitherto been the monotonous traditions of every nursery. He did also that bread and honey were good for the people at any time of the day when they felt hun-

After supper it was proposed, put to the vote, and passed unanimously, that, as a mark of admiration and respect, a statue in Puff Fasse should be erected to Tuflongbo near the Sun Pavilion, in commemoration of his discovery of the use to which the Old Moons are put, and of the introduction into Sheneland of Golden Honey, and Fruit of Aplepivi.

And the next day the Queen signed a commission, and Tuflongbo again set off on his important travels, with a view to discovering the whereabouts of the Puff-raspabi and the Alicompagni, two lost tribes which emigrated from Sheneland during the heavy reign of Queen Dull, and whom it was considered by Prince Goldheart highly desirable to recall. And Tuflongbo had everybody's best wishes for his success in his carpet-bag when he set off.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CONSPIRACY OF SPITE AND THE MASK-SELLERS.

YOU have not forgotten the signal punishment of Spite and her accomplices, for engaging in a plot to separate Prince Glee and Princess Trill ? We must now return to them.

When Spite had been painted black, she looked particularly hideous, but she bore herself loftily notwithstanding, and declared that her face was as white as anybody's. Her acquaintance was now, of course, always disowned in public, but she still had her friends in private ; and when the blackest black wore off her features, she went into society again for a little while much as usual ; but being discountenanced by all persons of station, and placed under the surveillance of Spy, she thought it as well to retire to Castle Craft, whence she could carry on a correspondence with her friends at Court with less annoyance to herself.

Her companions in guilt and punishment were also soon in high feather again ; for though Slander now stammered, and Sneer laughed on the wrong side of her mouth, and though Gossip, Idlewords, and Twaddle spoke through their noses, they pretended to have quite forgotten their experiences on the Stools of Penance, and vowed they had never been in disgrace at all. Indeed, nobody but the lawyers and jailers would ever have suspected how often they got into trouble ; for they had made the acquaintance of Specious, Plausible, and False Pretences, who had set up as Mask-sellers in



Sheneland, and whenever they were caught they puzzled Judge Grim, and Specs, the Public Accuser, by wearing a new mask on an old face.

Fairy Queen and Prince Goldheart would gladly have banished from Sheneland both the Mask-sellers and all those who resorted to them ; but by certain laws, made during the bad reign of Queen Dull, their trade was protected as well as their persons ; and so there they remained, and with Mischief ever ready to lend them a helping hand, they succeeded in making many fairies truly miserable, notwithstanding the wise and merciful government of Fairy Queen and Prince Goldheart.

Now Spite, shut up in her country residence of Castle Craft, had not thought it needful to apply to the Mask-sellers on her own account ; but one day her friend and correspondent, Wrinkle, wrote to her that she had been to see Specious, and had got him to paint her a new face, which made her look quite young again by moonlight. She added further, that if Spite had a mind to come up to Court for the grand entertainments which were soon to take place, no doubt Specious would be able to fit her out so as to defy even the recognition of Spy.

Now Spite, old as she was, loved gaiety to such an excess that the thought of Grand Entertainments at Elfin Court without the light of her presence, gave her the most acute pain. All that day, after receiving Wrinkle's letter, she sat by herself, biting her nails, and wondering what great event was to be celebrated by the entertainments. At last she grew tired of speculating, and determined to write to Gossip for all the news that she could collect. Gossip had not much to do when she got Spite's communication, or, at least, what she had to

do could wait awhile ; so she set off to Castle Craft in person, as the bearer of her own intelligence, and arrived just at nightfall.

Spite welcomed her with much satisfaction, and when they grew cosy at supper their talk became quite confidential.

"Now, dear Gossip, I am almost dying of curiosity, do begin and tell me what is going to happen at Court," said Spite, with wily affection.

"Make up your mind to something that will vex you *extremely*," replied Gossip, shaking her head significantly.

"What is it?" asked Spite, aghast.

"*Prince Glee and Princess Trill are going to be married*," said Gossip.

"Going to be married! Without asking my consent? Impossible! It can never be! It *shall* never be!" By the time Spite had uttered these vehement exclamations she was scarlet in the face, and shaking all over with passion. Gossip went on eating quite coolly.

"All Sheneland is talking about it, Spite; *all Sheneland*, I assure you," she said, popping a bit of pie into her mouth. "It will be such a wedding as has not taken place at Elfin Court in this generation. Fairy Queen herself will give the Princess a dower, and it is rumoured that Prince Glee will get the appointment of Master of the Revels at the Isle of Palms. Old Woman, who lives in the hollow of the Ash-tree, is spinning gossamer night and day as fast as she can spin, and her little Maid Brisk is on foot from dusk to dawn gathering silver rays, and from dawn to dusk gathering dew-sprent webs and silk of flowers. No expense will be spared to make everything worthy of the event and of the chief

actors in it. Already the Royal Cooks are at work, and the orders that have been sent out for fruit of Aplepivi, for honey, for custard and cream-tarts, for nectar of clover, and all manner of delicious dainties, is beyond belief! The day *before* the wedding there is to be a pic-nic in Elfin Wood, with music and dancing on the greensward, and in the evening a pantomime and a state supper. *After* the wedding there will be a Ball, surpassing even that at which Prince Glee and Princess Trill appeared when the Prince had stolen the Princess away from this very agreeable country residence. I have got cards for everything, and as you are not likely to see the fine doings yourself, I'll come down here again and tell you all about them when they are over."

"Thank you for *nothing*, Gossip," hissed Spite, grinning frightfully in her friend's face: "but I mean to be there myself; and *there'll be no wedding*, I can tell you that; *there'll be no wedding!*"

"You need not look so ugly, Aunt Spite; I don't care whether there is or not! When you get into a passion, your face is as black as if Brush had only just operated upon it!" said Gossip, in a pet.

"And you need not snuffle and talk through your nose so much," retorted Spite, "as if Tow had only just stopped your mouth!"

"You are very uncivil, Aunt Spite; and I shall leave you to get the rest of the news how and where you can!" cried Gossip.

"You have told me all I want to know, and so now be off with you, and a good riddance of bad rubbish!" shrieked Spite.

And so Gossip departed from Castle Craft, and being returned to Elfin Court, she made everybody laugh by



detailing the particulars of her visit, and repeating how Spite had threatened that *there should be no wedding*. Spy heard of what Spite had said, and immediately he and Watch were on the alert, lest she should creep up to Court in disguise, and really attempt some mischief to Prince Glee or Princess Trill.

Fairy Queen, Prince Goldheart, and the Prince and Princess were also informed of the malicious old creature's threat, but they did not feel it of sufficient importance to make them uneasy, and the preparations for the wedding went on without check or hindrance.

But, nevertheless, Spite outwitted them all, and came up to Court as a Stranger from the Country, and even Spy did not know her. How she was enabled to do so you are now going to learn.

When Gossip left Castle Craft, Spite took some time to cool down and recover herself; but presently she said, "Wrinkle's suggestion is the best. I'll go to the Mask-sellers and buy a new face, and then we shall see what we shall see, my pretty Trill. You'll be a bird singing in a cage before long, I promise you; and Prince Glee may peck at the bars till he's a hundred, but he'll never get you out!"

And so Spite put on her cloak, pulled her hood over her head, took her staff in her hand, and telling young Fibs, the secret doorkeeper of Castle Craft, that he might expect her back every minute until he saw her, she set out on her journey to the Chief City of Shene-land, where lived Specious, Plausible, and False-Pre-tences. As it was Specious who had been so successful in making Wrinkle look young again, Spite determined to consult with him first; and it was very lucky for her she did; for when she reached his dwelling, which was



situated in one of the narrowest and dimmest back streets, she found that he was giving a tea-party to his friends, amongst whom she found Plausible and False-Pretences, and her own old cronies, Slander, Whisper, and Sneer.

The meeting was delightful to all ; Slander, Whisper, and Sneer said they were charmed to see their dear friend Spite once more; and Spite declared herself thankful to meet them again, too; "for," said she, with a profound sigh, "I have no congenial society within reach of Castle Craft, and never see a civilised creature to speak to from one week's end to another, unless poor Malice drops in to pay me a morning visit."

So all her friends consoled with Spite, and Whisper said she must come back to Elfin Court by hook or by crook, for Castle Craft was no sphere for her talents; and Spite said in her ear confidentially that what Whisper suggested was the object of her present visit to the Mask-sellers. In a few moments all the company round the tea-table had been slyly informed of Spite's business, and when the urn had been carried out, a dark lantern was put in its place, the tray and empty trenchers were removed, and Specious brought forth his books of disguises of every pattern that the ingenuity of Old Lies, False, and Crafty had ever been able to invent.

Slander, Sneer, and Whisper began to turn them over with much stealthy enjoyment, and to mention which they should like best to wear if they had a plot in hand; but Spite was more attracted by the singular masks hanging on the walls, for she had lived long enough to learn that it is by countenance, and not by clothes, that wise folks judge, and that Spite in gossamer of gold would be Spite still, as plainly as if she went up to

Court in her penitential robes, and with her visage as black as Brush painted it.

Specious walked round the room with her, talking low, and pointing out the various merits of his masks; Plausible and False Pretences listened, and now and then put in a word of advice; and Spite began to feel that the way to Court was becoming exceedingly smooth before her. By degrees she let out to the three Mask-sellers that she wished to prevent the Marriage of Prince Glee and Princess Trill above all things, and that at any price it *must* be accomplished. Specious, Plausible, and False Pretences immediately drew together, and consulted about the means, while Spite waited anxiously to hear what they made out. False Pretences observed that she showed a marked admiration for a very sleek, oily mask with fixed creases of smiles about the mouth, and a languishing, watery look in the eyes, and this gave him an idea.

“I have it!” cried he, unctuously; “we will first make a mask exactly like our friend Spite here, and fit it with straps; then we will make another mask on the model of Pious Hypocrisy, which she shall put on. It passes with favour in almost every form of society, and thus disguised, our excellent client will be able to return to Elfin Court without exciting the smallest suspicion. She will carry under her cloak the copy of her own face; and having gained admittance into Princess Trill’s bower, she will beguile her with crafty conversation, gently slip the mask from its concealment, put it on the Princess, and strap it fast under her flowing golden hair.”

“What a triumphant device!” cried Specious and Plausible simultaneously; but Spite, though pleased, was cautious, and wished to know what next.

"What next?" echoed False Pretences. "Everything you like next. From the moment that the mask imitated from your own face is put on Princess Trill, all her friends will avoid her. Prince Glee himself will not know her; Fairy Queen will forbid her the Court; the Maids of Honour will ridicule her; Wink will play her tricks; and she will be brought to the very verge of despair."

"And at that moment," said Plausible, taking up the word as his fellow mask-seller dropt it, "you, in your new character, will drop in with oily consolations; you will beguile her away from the precincts of the palace, draw her deep into Elfin Wood, and then she will be in your power, and you can carry her off to Castle Craft, or to any other safe place of captivity which you may prefer."

"I shall not take her to Castle Craft again," said Spite. "No, no; I'll make her trip farther than Castle Craft, I promise her."

"Where will you take her, dear Spite?" asked Whisper, insinuatingly.

"I shall not tell you," retorted Spite. "So if you think to get some fun yourself by setting Prince Glee on her track, you'll be disappointed; and if he is silly enough to go in search of her again, a pretty wild-goose chase I'll give him, you may rely on it."

"Come, come, ladies, no quarrelling; let all go softly," said Plausible; "we have not finished our business yet. There are the masks to make; and I want to know if there is any chance of getting Elf Transformation on our side."

"Not the smallest chance in the world," replied
"Elf Transformation always holds with those
relatives of mine, Justice and Truth."

"We should do almost as well if we could get possession of her wand," observed Specious.

"If little Prig were free, I daresay he would have stolen it for us; but Professor Birch has got hold of him," answered Spite.

"Then we must manage without it—at any rate, Mischief is always at your beck and call."

"Oh, yes! And I am a person of many devices myself. Only let me get within reach of Princess Trill, and she will not escape me."

"Then we will summon the craftsmen, and get the Masks made at once," said Specious.

"Do, by all means, and I shall reach Elfin Court to-night: I shall go to the pic-nic, and dance on the sward.

"Stop, madam!" cried False Pretences, in alarm "you must act up to your character. *Pious Hypocrisy does not go to pic-nics, and does not dance on the sward.* If you would gratify your passion of spite against Prince Glee and Princess Trill, you must forego every other indulgence until that is accomplished."

Spite sulkily acquiesced in the propriety of this; and having taken her seat in the operating chair, Waxy was called, and made a model from her face, while Guile and Smirk copied the Mask of Pious Hypocrisy, which she was to wear over her own dark and sharp features. Waxy's model was admitted by everybody to be perfection; and when Daub had coloured it, Whisper said in the ear of her tart friend, "Now, my dear, you see yourself as others see you;" and giggled with glee at Spite's vexation. Spite, however, put up with the insolence, and pretended not to notice Sneer's significant expression, for she had no wish to alienate her acquaintance at present; and when the Mask of Pious Hypocrisy



was finished, she put it on, drew her hood up over her head, and smiled upon them, quite another person.

"Well, I declare!" cried Whisper, under her breath.

"I should never have known her!" said Slander; but Sncer looked very much as if she discerned something of her old friend still under all that mask of oily blandness.

"I think our plot may be pronounced a success," remarked Plausible, rubbing his grisly hands; and both Specious and False Pretences agreed with him, and were full of admiration at the artist-like work of Gaile and Smirk.

"I shall only wear my mask so long as it serves my purpose, for it will be very irksome," said Spite, uneasily; "you will receive it back by the hand of Mischief as soon as ever I have got clear away from Elfin Court with Princess Trill."

"Keep it by you, you may need it again," exclaimed Specious. "We have made you a conspiracy, and furnished you with means to carry it on, but we never answer for success if our rules and counsels are neglected."

"Stuff and nonsense!" retorted Spite; "you are a pack of knaves, and ——"

"Madam, I *implore* you, *speak in character*, or all is lost!" cried Plausible, going down on his knees to her.

"Fudge! Well, my beloved friends, I beg to take a grateful leave of you, to thank you for your amiable hospitality, and courteously to bid you remember me in your orisons. Fare ye well, fare ye well!"

And, with a creasy smile on her broad new face, Spite left the Mask-sellers' dwelling, and set out on her journey to Elfin Court.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

. SPITE'S JOURNEY TO ELFIN COURT.

IT was quite dark when Spite set off on her journey; and she had not gone far when she set her foot on something soft, and jumped aside with a scream as she heard some creature giggling up overhead amongst the branches of the trees.

"Who are you that molest peaceable wayfarers?" said she, in a voice to match her mask of Pious Hypocrisy.

"I am the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils, old Friend," replied the giggling, ape-like creature, grinning down on her.

"*Old Friend, indeed!* I don't know you; and I'll trouble you not to claim the acquaintance of respectable people!" cried Spite, in a rage.

At this the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils giggled all the more; and when he had done giggling, he hissed out, "I can see in the dark, and *I know you, Aunt Spite*, for all you have been to the Mask-sellers, and got fitted out so prettily."

"Hush! not a word, *Friend*," now whispered Spite, quaking from head to foot. "You won't betray me, *Friend?*"

"Not I; go, and take my good wishes with you, and these tendrils, for you may have a use for them;" and with that he threw her down a bundle as strong as cords, which she picked up and put in her pocket.

As she again moved to go on, she trod on the soft

thing once more; it lurched and groaned, and Spite, with another start and jump, asked angrily, "Who have you got tied down here, amongst the nettles?"

"It is little Idle, who was Old Woman's Maid," replied the Wicked Fairy up in the tree.

"Oh, by the by, where does Old Woman live? I want to make inquiry of her concerning the festivities that are soon to take place at Elfin Court," said Spite. "I daresay she will know everything, as she is the chief gossamer weaver."

"She lives in the Hollow of the Ash-Tree, about half-a-mile off, on the left-hand side as you go," answered the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils. "She will tell you all you wish to know, for Gossip has just left her; and her little maid, Brisk, will set out to gather rays and silver stripes as soon as ever the Moon is up and the Stars come out."

And having got what information she could out of the giggler in the tree, Spite walked on, and presently met little Brisk coming through the glade, on her way to the Enchanted Bower, where she was going to gather rays off the wild white roses while the dew was on them. She stopped when Spite spoke to her in a treacley voice, and asked, "Who are you, my little dear?"

"I am Brisk, Old Woman's little Maid," said she, and was passing on, when Spite caught her arm and detained her.

"Wait, my little dear—what hurry?" said she. "I want to ask you if you have seen the fair Princess Trill taking her morning walks in Elfin Wood lately?"

"She walks out with Prince Glee, Worry, and Dopple, every morning," replied Brisk.

"And *never alone*, my little dear?"

"*Never alone.*"

And so, as that was all she could learn from Brisk, Spite trudged on again, and in a very few minutes she reached Old Woman's House, made in the Hollow of the Ash-Tree; and there was Old Woman spinning in the doorway, as hard as if she were spinning for her life. Spite accosted her in her treacley voice, and begged leave, as a weary wayfarer, to sit and rest.

"*Oil and vinegar*," said Old Woman, who had a trick of saying what she thought aloud, as well as what she meant people to hear. "Yes, you may sit down on the pint-stoup, and rest, if you are tired. You should do as I do: I never stir from home, and so I am never tired."

"But I have the good of my fellow-creatures at heart, and one can't help them by sitting still," said Spite, insinuatingly.

"I don't believe a word of *that*," thought Old Woman, aloud, and then she asked, "Pray, madam, whom are you going to benefit now?"

"The lovely Princess Trill."

"She'll do better without you," thought Old Woman again. "I shall drop her a word of caution."

"Ho! ho! will you, my worthy friend!" said Spite, to herself. "I'll be beforehand with you!" So up she rose from the pint-stoup, thanked Old Woman blandly for her hospitality, and resumed her journey. As she went out of sight, Old Woman, looking after her, thought aloud once more, "Fat and smooth as her face is, she has got a wonderful cast of Aunt Spite in her eyes." And then she went on spinning.

During the night, the Stranger from the Country, as

Spite now called herself, made considerable way, and just as morning broke she entered on a glade of Elfin Wood, near the Queen's Hunting Palace, to which her Majesty and the Court had lately returned from the Air Palace in the wooded chine of the rocks. From the distance, she could see Whip and the inferior huntsmen bringing out the pack for exercise, and having no fancy to fall into their jaws, she waited where she was until the noisy troop had disappeared in another direction.

But even then any approach to the Palace was prevented by the fact of Dapple and Worry being left behind to keep guard at the gates with Watch and Spy; so the Stranger from the Country was fain to sit down amongst the underwood, and wait for an eligible opportunity to slip into the Palace unobserved. She had to wait a long while, and feeling extremely hungry, she made a miserable breakfast off a toadstool, which disagreed with her so violently that she was almost in a mind to fling off her mask of Pious Hypocrisy, and rush into the Palace in her own undisguised person. But the desire of revenge prevailed over this spasm of passion, and she resigned herself to her suffering with as much resolution as would come to her aid.

She had got over her worst anguish, when her attention was called off by seeing Dapple and Worry jump up and wag their tails, and run to and fro in great joy to welcome Prince Glee and Princess Trill, who were just issuing from the Palace Gates to take their morning walk. When these rapturous greetings were over, all four turned to come up the glade at the end of which the Stranger from the Country was crouching amongst the underwood. Dapple came first, turning





Prince Gice and Princess Trill meeting the Stranger from the Country.
P. 233

her sharp nose hither and thither to snuff out an enemy; behind her followed Prince Glee and Princess Trill, arm in arm; and Worry brought up the rear with much demonstration of fuss and consequence. Now, Worry and Dopple had received a special commission from Fairy Queen herself to keep an eye on Princess Trill, and never to lose sight of her until she was safely married to Prince Glee, and ready to set sail with him to the Isle of Palms, where he had been presented to the appointment of Master of the Revels; and the two worthy animals performed their duty with true canine fidelity.

As they drew near to where she was concealed, the Stranger from the Country began to experience some anxiety for her personal safety, if she did not promptly meet the danger face to face. So up she rose, shook out her cloak, rearranged her hood, and smiling her oiliest, advanced towards the lovers. When Dopple perceived this sudden apparition, she gave a low growl of warning, and Worry immediately sprang forward, and, with his companion, instituted a searching examination of the feet and ankles of the Stranger from the Country, much to her terror and discomfort, for every moment she expected to feel their teeth meeting through her skin and bone—she had no flesh worth mentioning. But the animals thought better of it, and when Princess Trill sang out in her sweetest voice, "To heel, Worry; quiet, good Dopple!" on the instant they were obedient, and retired to their proper positions.

The Stranger from the Country, thankful for this deliverance, bowed to Princess Trill, who returned the courtesy with some hurry and reluctance.

"Dear Prince Glee!" whispered she, breathlessly,

“do you see anything in that person's face which reminds you of Aunt Spite? I thought she glanced at me with a very malignant eye, notwithstanding her smiles.”

“She is an odious-looking creature; but I do not see a likeness to Aunt Spite, my precious love; so calm your fears, hush your tremulous palpitations,” replied Prince Glee, tenderly. “Aunt Spite, you know, is safe at Castle Craft.”

For all this reminder and encouragement, Princess Trill could not help looking back over her shoulder two or three times to see in what direction the Stranger from the Country went; and her dismay was increased when she saw Spy and Watch bowing to her in a very conciliatory manner, and then unlocking the Palace gates for her admittance.

Yes, Spy and Watch, sharp as they were, were not sharp enough to see through the mask of Pious Hypocrisy which Spite wore under her hood; and as it was a rule at Fairy Queen's Court to allot suites of apartments to distinguished Strangers from the Country who came up to witness grand festivals, she was immediately conducted to the elegant bower over the gate, from which she could watch the incomings and outgoings of every member of the Court.

She then sent round her card, and before the day was out half the dignitaries of the Royal Household, the principal members of the Society of Wiseacres, and all the *élite* of the wit and respectability of Elfin Court, had paid her a visit of ceremony, and gone away highly prepossessed in her favour. And that night the Stranger from the Country slept on thistle-down without a single thorn in her pillow.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SPITE'S INTERVIEW WITH FANCY, THE COURT
MORALIST AND STORY-TELLER.

THE next morning, the Stranger from the Country was up betimes; and the first sound she heard was the Grand Pomp and his trumpeters blowing the alarm for all the Court to prepare to go out to the Pic-nic in Elfin Wood, where there was to be music and dancing on the greensward. It was with a spasm of acute disappointment that Spite now remembered the warning False Pretences had given her; for she would dearly have liked to make herself smart, and to have gone abroad with the rest of the pleasure-seekers; but as that could not be without seriously imperilling the success of the plot she had in hand, she resigned herself to her fate, dressed herself in her sad-coloured garments with the utmost care, threw open the window of her bower, and ensconced herself behind the curtain, to watch the departure of the Royal train.

At that moment the provisions for luncheon were just beginning to be packed by the Court Cooks, and Spite saw hamper after hamper of sweets brought forth at the gates, and put into the carriages. Already, too, the gay young sparks were gathering in knots, and waiting for the coming of the Queen and her pretty Maids of Honour. Spite recognised many of these juvenile fairies, and bowed to them with much condescension. There was Frolic waiting for Clipsome, and Wink waiting for Dot, and Dump waiting for Touchy;



there was old Tippet, in a new cloak of coquelicot, waiting for some sparkling Elf to fall in love with him ; there was Tippetty Wichet and his Brothers ; there was Trip, Try-for-it, Finick, Turn, Twist, Lush, and Trap on the look out for Bluebell, Satin, Sleek, Sly, Flip, Arch, Mite, and Dimple ; there was Tricksy, with Quip and Crank, and a great many more besides, too numerous to mention.

Spite watched the gay and happy crowd with very envious feelings, until the great gates below the window of her bower were flung wide open, and, with soft music preceding her, Fairy Queen came forth.

Her Majesty rode a white butterfly, and was immediately followed by Mother Dignity on a humble bee ; Prince Goldheart rode at his Royal Mistress's right hand upon a spirited dragon-fly, and Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, rode at her left, mounted on a beetle.

Next came Princess Trill and Prince Glee, in apparel of gossamer and silver, mounted on golden-winged moths ; and then followed, two and two, the Maids of Honour and the Royal Pages riding upon young flies. The Knights Fairy of the Guard rode armed cockchafers ; and the gay young fairies whom Spite had seen collecting before the Royal train appeared, now mounted their respective steeds, and galloped off in the dust kicked up by the cockchafers. There were still a few left behind, however. There was Hedgehog, the family coach of the three sisters, Snip, Snap, and Snarl ; and when those elderly Elves were driving slowly off, they saw Tippet, and invited him to take a seat behind ; which, with a singularly bad grace, he did. Then there was Dump, who got very slowly under weigh

in his country-built carriage of a snail-shell, drawn by a gray obstinate snail; and there was Tippetty Wichet and his brothers, who found their drag, with its team of eight wrong-headed wasps, almost more than they could manage; and besides these, there were numerous members of the Royal Society of Wiseacres, who, being but little accustomed to equestrian exercises, were carried off by their respective spiders into remote nooks of Elfin Wood, where it is to be feared they saw very little indeed of the Pic-nic.

But at last they were all off, and the Court Yard of the Hunting Palace echoed only to the monotonous tread of the sentinels, Watch and Spy. In this state of things the Stranger from the Country began to feel very melancholy, and to long for some private diversion; so she left her bower, and after straying some time through the deserted apartments of the Palace, she came by chance upon the Royal Theatre, where the Mimes, under the direction of Fancy, the Court Moral-ist and Story-Teller, were preparing the Pantomime for the evening's entertainment.

Fancy bowed, and begged her to remain, as she was about to retire, with an air of being exceedingly shocked and horrified.

"There is no harm here, madam, I assure you!" cried he, good-humouredly; "you permit a heated and ignorant imagination to run away with you. Pray attend our Pantomime, and you will learn henceforward not to condemn or deride us."

"I will consider of it," said the Stranger from the Country; "but all my principles are against frivolous amusements."

"Madam, it seems to me that I know your voice,"



said Fancy reflectively; "I also discern something familiar in your visage."

"Sir, you are mistaken. You and I never met before; our connexions and pursuits are totally distinct," replied the Stranger, sharply.

"Certainly, madam, certainly. But do you happen to know the Fairy of the Enclosed Garden on the Borders of Sheneland, where the Sun never shines?" asked Fancy.

"No, sir; I do not own the acquaintance of any such person."

"Permit me to return with you to your bower, and tell you her story," said Fancy; "you have a long day before you, and as I have now seen all put in train for the Pantomime of this evening, I should be very glad to give some time to your service."

"I do not want to hear any of your nonsense," snapt the Stranger from the Country, forgetting her assumed character.

"Madam, you must then hear how Truth plucked the Mask from the Face of Pious Hypocrisy," urged Fancy, significantly.

"No, sir, I would rather hear the first story you named," replied the Stranger, now humbly enough; and she quaked all over with the dread of discovery. So Fancy, the Royal Moralist, accompanied her to her bower, and told her the tale of the "Enclosed Garden, where the Sun never Shines."

THE ENCLOSED GARDEN, WHERE THE SUN NEVER
SHINES.

"On the borders of Sheneland there is an Enclosed Garden, where the sun never shines, and in which lives

a woman alone—always alone, with the great walls built up to the sky, and never a summer day to warm her all the year round. She walks to and fro in the cold shadow, generally with her chin on her breast, and her eyes downcast, muttering to herself, '*It is all my own—it is all my own,*' but, now and then, she looks forward and outward, and then her face shows narrow, and thin, and bitter, and when she says, '*It is all my own,*' again, an ugly laugh twists her lips, as if she were laughing at herself.

"In the Enclosed Garden there are many things beautiful to the eye, but they want the genial sun to make them as beautiful as they might be.

"There are clustered roses, but they are quite pale—not one crimson blush amongst them all; there are fine fruits hanging on the trees, but they are crude and sour, and would set your teeth on edge if you tried to eat them. In the midst of this abundance, the woman, who goes to and fro muttering, '*It is all my own—it is all my own,*' is starving inch by inch. Now and then she ceases the doleful triumph, and makes a snatch at the robe covering her sapless breast; under it her heart lies cold as any stone; and then she says, '*What is it all worth!*' and a mocking Fairy voice answers back from beyond the wall, '*Nothing—but it is all thy own.*' Then with her nails she tries to pick the mortar out between the stones, and to peer through a chink at what lies outside her garden, but she only wounds her hands and fails; so then she betakes herself again to the solemn pacing to and fro, with hunger gnawing at her throat, with her heart lying in her breast cold as any stone, and muttering as she goes, in the same monotonous, miserable voice, '*It is all my own—it is all my own;*



but what is it worth !' and the Fairy mocks her beyond the wall with, 'Nothing—but it is all thy own.'

"Once upon a time, where the Enclosed Garden lies now, stood a little cottage, in which lived a woodman and his wife and their three daughters. The name of the oldest was Clutch, the name of the second was Waste, and the name of the third was Frail.

"This woodman and his wife were very decent, honest, hard-working people ; he went out to his labours in the forest every morning at daybreak, and did not return till the sun went down ; but his wife stayed at home, guided the house, and took care of the children.

"Now each of these three children had a Fairy godmother who had given her her own name. Fairy Clutch was Clutch's godmother, Fairy Waste was Waste's godmother, and Fairy Frail was Frail's godmother. Their father and mother loved Frail the best because she was little and weak, and often in trouble ; and they loved Clutch the least because she was rough and strong, and was always thinking how much good she could do for herself, and how little she could do for anybody else. As for Waste, she wandered about the woods like a wild thing, and was sometimes missing for days and days together ; but when she had eaten all she carried away and was hungry, then she came back to the cottage, led by the lamp that always burned in the window after nightfall, and, tapping on the glass, she begged to be taken in. Her father always rose and opened the door, and her mother kissed her, and said, 'Some night, Waste, there will be no light in the pane when thou art seeking thy way home, and thou wilt go astray into the thick forest, where wild beasts will fall upon thee and devour thee.'

“But Waste only laughed and warmed herself at the fire, while her mother dried her clothes, and Frail, who had a loving heart, brought out bread, and milk, and honey, to refresh her sister. All this time Clutch would sit straight up by the hearth, with her narrow garments tucked about her heels, her lips pinched, her brows bent, and her eyes full of gloom, thinking, in her bad heart, ‘This is the way my father and mother waste their substance; there will be little enough for any of us when they die;’ and every morsel of food that went down poor Waste’s throat she begrudged as if it were a piece of gold out of her own portion; but Waste only ate the more, to vex her.

“All round the cottage there was a pretty, plain place, where the trees of the forest had been cut down, and fine fruit-trees planted in their stead, with scented flowers and shrubs, and useful medicinal herbs in patches between them. Frail liked to lie on the grass in the sunshine, half-hearing the sounds of the bees and the birds in the branches, while she drowsed through the long summer day; Waste liked to shake the blossoms down when they were full, and to cover Frail with the white and rosy leaves; but Clutch let her fruit hang till it was ripe, then she gathered it, and stored it in sacks, in a safe place, and locked it up, and let nobody get at it; and there it lay till it rotted. Whatever Clutch laid her hands upon was never of use to any one, for she could not endure to see her gatherings lessen, and if any person was so ill-advised as to come near to take some by force, she let loose upon them in an instant her ugly mastiff, Greed, and cried out in a rage, ‘It is all my own—it is all my own!’

“Now it came to pass that at length the woodman

and his wife died. The mother died the first, and then the father. Before the father died he called his three daughters round his bed, and spoke to them as follows:—

“‘Clutch, thou art the eldest, and to thee I leave it in charge to do justice to thy sisters, Waste and Frail. Be thou patient and forgiving with Waste, and be thou watchful and loving with Frail.’

“Then Clutch wept Crocodile’s tears, and cried, ‘O father! I will—I will.’

“Then the woodman, believing her, said, ‘Here is the cottage and garden: let them be divided into three portions, and agree amongst yourselves for the first choice: only take care of Frail, for she was her mother’s own child; and don’t let Waste starve, because I loved her.’ And so the old man died.

“As soon as he was buried, Clutch divided the garden into *two* equal parts, and calling Waste and Frail to witness, said, ‘See what I have done: *that*, pointing to the left, is for you two, and *this*, pointing to the right, is for me, too.’

“Waste measured the land shrewdly with her eye, and said, ‘Nay, but Sister Clutch, this is not fair. Our Father told thee to make *three* portions of his inheritance, and thou hast made but *two*, and taken the better for thine own.’

“‘I knew there would be strife,’ cried Clutch, in a rage; ‘it is ill dealing with knaves and fools—let us part. Tell me what thou wilt take for thy share.’

“Then Waste, who had little mind to live under her elder sister’s niggard rule, bartered her portion of the land for so much bread, honey, and wine, and having filled her wallet, she kissed Frail, and went out at the cottage door to seek her a new home.

“No sooner was Waste gone than Clutch cried out to Frail, ‘Come, Lazybones, up and work: there shall be no folded hands where I rule.’

“So poor Frail, though she was little and weak, got up and did her best; but the sun was very hot in the mid-day, and presently Frail came creeping to her sister’s side, and prayed, ‘Dear Clutch, let me rest!’ But Clutch was angry and shook her roughly by the arm, saying, ‘Thou art idle; thou art idle. Waste is gone—come, tell me what thou wilt take for thy share of the land, and thou shalt begone too.’

“‘Only give me Peace,’ said Frail, ‘and freedom from thy bitter bondage!’ and on that Clutch thrust her also to the door, and she went away feebly into the cool shade of the forest.

“Then Clutch clapped her hands, and cried, ‘*It is all my own! It is all my own!*’ and in came her fairy godmother, and they had a long talk about it; the ugly mastiff, Greed, sitting between them and listening with cocked ears to every word they said.

“‘I’ll build a wall round it, so that nobody shall be able to see over,’ cried Clutch, in high glee; ‘then the fruit will never be stolen, and I shall have plenty to store up, if I live a hundred years. There was no telling where things went, as long as Waste and Frail were in the house; but now I shall have everything in my own way, because it is all my own!’

“Then her Fairy godmother patted Clutch’s ugly head, and declared that she was a child after her own heart.

“The next day Clutch began to build, and her godmother helped her with right good-will, while Greed kept watch to worry Waste and Frail if they should venture



to come by that way again. Before winter arrived the wall was pretty nearly breast high, but when the snow was on the ground they ceased building, and Greed slept by a starved fire indoors; while Clutch reckoned up every evening how rich she would be, if she lived a hundred years, and had every year a good fruit harvest. The result of this calculation always put Clutch into such high good humour, that she would give Greed; who commonly had to fare for himself, and was consequently lean and savage enough, *all* her potato-skins, and *all* her cheese-parings; *all* was not *quite* a feast; but Greed was so famished that he would thankfully have eaten his own tail had it not been too short to admit of a bite.

“Now it happened one night the snow fell so thickly, that Clutch, looking out of the window, could see nothing but a white curtain driven across and across it, before the wind, but she could hear something which sounded like a cry beyond the wall. Listening, she knew it was her sister Frail. Frail was weeping faintly, and now and then she raised her voice, and cried out: ‘Clutch! Clutch! I was my mother’s own child! Take me out of the storm! O Clutch! it is so cold, and I have had nothing to eat since the snow began to fall yesterday.’ At which Clutch laughed, and looked so ugly, that even Greed snarled at her. There was silence for a minute or two, and then the wail recommenced: ‘O Clutch! dear Clutch! give me a corner by thy fire, and a crust of bread!’ But Clutch only laughed again, shut to the window, and said: ‘Not I! *It is all my own!*’

“And the next morning, when the fairy godmother came in, she said to the child after her own heart:



'Clutch, there's a pretty log lying by the wall that the snow has covered; go thou and dig it out. It will make us a rare fire.'

"So Clutch took her shovel and called Greed to help, bidding him scratch the snow away; but Greed would only sit on his stump of a tail and howl till the whole forest echoed again. And when Clutch had shovelled the log clear, behold it was her sister Frail,—her mother's own child,—and she was dead. Then Clutch wept crocodile's tears over her, and said she was very sorry; but at night she comforted herself with calculations.

"When the winter was gone, Clutch and her fairy godmother set to work on the wall again, and the fame of what they were doing went abroad throughout all Sheneland, and brought many people from far and near to behold the works.


"'Take care, Clutch, or thou wilt build out the sun, and then, who will ripen thy fruit for thee?' cried an old man, who had seen the wisdom and folly of many things.

"'I do but build out thieves and robbers, and may I not do what I will with mine own?' replied Clutch, heaving up a great stone.

"'If thou wouldst build out thieves, thou must build out thyself,' cried another. 'Who robbed Waste and Frail of their inheritance? Who left little Frail to die in the snow?'

"But Clutch only scoffed at them, and built on. And by and by, when she was one day hard at work, she heard a voice which she knew; and it was Waste calling to her.

"'Clutch! Clutch! art thou there?' she cried.



“So Clutch, who was high on a ladder, looked over and saw Waste all in rags, and very thin, miserable, and travel-worn. Clutch laughed at the piteous sight, and asked her sister what she wanted.

“Take me home and let me rest, dear Clutch,’ said Waste; ‘I have been in far lands and can teach thee new ways of growing rich.’

“But Clutch replied, ‘I like my own way best.’

“‘Then I will work for thee for a wage,’ said Waste, looking up with thin starved face.

“‘Nay; for thou wouldst destroy more than thou couldst earn.’

“‘I will be thy slave for a little bread to eat and a little water to drink,’ pleaded Waste.

“But Clutch only grinned her ugly grin that made Greed snarl, and said nothing.

“Then give me a morsel of food, because my father loved me,’ urged Waste, with tears in her hollow eyes; but Clutch shook her head, and only went down the ladder for more mortar.

“‘Where is my sister, little Frail?’ cried Waste again.

“‘Go to the lily-bed by the water-course, and there thou wilt find her.’

“So Waste dragged herself feebly to the lily-bed by the water-course, but no Frail was there—only something in shape like a grave, and ragged grass waving on it.

“And the next day, when the Fairy godmother went to see Clutch again, she said: ‘Coming by Frail’s grave, I found these bits of clothing, and there were certain bones strewn there as of one torn by wolves.’

“‘It has been as our mother said! The wild beasts of the forest have fallen on Waste, and devoured her!’



and Clutch wept crocodile's tears again, but she laughed in her heart, for now she was sure that she should never be disturbed in possession of her inheritance.

"But she soon discovered that she should not be nearly as happy as she expected, and her Fairy god-mother found her such dull company that at last she went away and left her to herself. The next misfortune was, that one night Greed died in his sleep, and though Clutch still went on making her calculations, she had no comfort in them any longer.

"And a mocking Fairy set up her bower in the sunshine over the wall, and mocked her as she walked about counting her harvest, and saying—'*It is all my own—it is all my own*'—for Clutch is the miserable woman in the Enclosed Garden on the Borders of Sheneland, where the Sun never shines."

"*Now*, Madam, do you know my Fairy?" asked Fancy, when he had finished his narrative.

"No, sir, I do not," replied the Stranger from the Country.

"But you will know her some day, Madam. She calls cousins with Spite and Pious Hypocrisy, and they generally end their days with her."

"That is no concern of mine—I do not intermeddle with the concerns of strangers," said Spite, gaining a little courage from the very imminence of her danger. She felt sure Fancy had his suspicions about her; or why should he have told her such a dismal legend?

"Do you not?" said the Court Moralist. "That is a good principle to go upon, but I believe I have heard it rumoured that you are hand and glove with Specious, Plausible, and False Pretences."



"Nothing of the kind, sir; I am a simple Stranger from the Country, and never was at the Mask-sellers' in my life," cried Spite, trembling.

"Indeed, Madam; then I will leave you until I can have the pleasure of seeing Truth tear the mask from the Face of Pious Hypocrisy. When that instructive scene takes place you will be present, Madam. I wrote the Plot of the Piece a long while ago, but it will be more interesting to you to see the play played than to hear it merely recited. And so I will now take my leave, for I hear the trumpets which herald the return of Fairy Queen and the Royal Train from the Pic-nic."

So Fancy, the Court Moralist and Story-Teller, withdrew, and left the Stranger from the Country shaking in her shoes and grinding her teeth in the extremity of her fear. That horrible sensation lasted until the courtyard of the Hunting Palace was all astir, and her curiosity tempted her to look out again. Then in her rage at the sight of Princess Trill blushing like a red rose as Prince Glee assisted her to alight from her golden-winged moth, she forgot her own perils, and said to herself, with bitter determination, "Come what will, there shall be no wedding to-morrow! *there shall be no wedding to-morrow!*"

And all that evening, while Fairy Queen and her Court were at the Pantomime and the State Supper afterwards, Spite sat in the bower by herself, maturing the wicked plans which were to prevent it and throw all Elfin Court into mourning. But that night when she went to bed there was a whole forest of thorns in her pillow of thistle-down, and not one wink of sleep did she get for thinking of the time when she might no longer call Castle Craft her own, and when she might



be placed under the parsimonious house-keeping of Mistress Clutch, who lived in the Enclosed Garden on the Borders of Sheneland where the Sun never shines.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW THE CONSPIRACY OF THE MASK-SELLERS WAS QUITE SUCCESSFUL, AND HOW PRINCESS TRILL WAS CARRIED OFF.

THE next morning all Elfin Court woke up to the merry music of every bell in Sheneland ringing in the wedding-day of lovely Princess Trill and gallant Prince Glee.

In Princess Trill's beautiful bower were assembled all the four and twenty Maids of Honour, with Mother Dignity at the head of them, to help to array her in her bridal robes; and at the same time Prince Glee was being dressed in his bridal garments by the four and twenty Royal Pages, with Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, at the head of them.

The Hunting Palace had never been in such a bustle and fuss since it was a Palace, but Fairy Queen, for the love she bore sweet Princess Trill and her Cousin Prince Glee, put up with the disturbance with serene amiability, and while conversing with Prince Goldheart on affairs of state, she snatched a moment to send a message to the Princess's bower to the effect that she desired to see her and present her in person with a wedding gift as soon as her toilette was completed.

When the messenger arrived, the Princess was just

sitting down on a stool, for Mother Dignity, who was short and fat, to fasten the veil of dew-besprent gossamer upon her golden hair, crowned with white rosebuds from the Enchanted Bower. Mother Dignity suggested that it would be more respectful for the fair bride to receive her sovereign unveiled; so Princess Trill sent word back to the Queen that she was ready, and in a very few minutes her Majesty appeared.

The Queen carried in her hand a casket of jewels, and taking Princess Trill aside, she spread them before her, saying, "Sweet Cousin, these are the best gifts I can give thee as a bride. Here is the fair Pearl of Meekness, the Emerald of Duty, the Ruby of Love, and the Diamond of Purity. Wear them, and be happy." And with that the Queen kissed her and withdrew.

Then the four and twenty Maids of Honour gathered about Princess Trill again and extolled her gifts, and Mother Dignity put the Pearl of Meekness over her forehead, and the Emerald of Duty in her hand, and the Ruby of Love on her lips, and the Diamond of Purity on her heart, and then bade her sit down on the stool again, and let her fasten the veil of dew-besprent gossamer over her golden hair; for a message had come from Prince Glee to say that he was dressed, and all the wedding was ready, and only waiting for her.

Just at this moment, however, there came another interruption in the shape of Flat, a Court Usher. Mother Dignity was quite put out by the delay, and asked sharply what he wanted. To this Flat replied, that a benevolent Stranger, who had come up from Country only yesterday, besought it as a favour which more than her life depended that she

five minutes' conversation with Princess Trill alone before she was married. It would have been a very uncourteous thing for a bride to refuse so simple a grace as this ; so the Princess in her dulcet voice ordered the Stranger from the Country to be shown into her inner bower, and putting aside the veil which Mother Dignity still held in her hands, she went to speak to her visitor.

When Princess Trill appeared before the benevolent Stranger from the Country, she was all over one blush of loveliness, and that person started back quite amazed, and was not mistress of her parts of speech for several seconds, so great was her astonishment and vexation at the sight ; but when Princess Trill looked up in the benevolent Stranger's face, and saw that she was the person whom she and Prince Glee had met in Elfin Wood, she was ready to sink to the ground with terror ; for, instead of wearing only a broad, treacley smile, the Stranger now allowed a malicious gleam of triumph to shine out of her green eyes.

"Fair Princess, I have brought you a gift from a venerable relative of yours, who is prevented by urgent private affairs from assisting at your marriage," said the Stranger from the Country ; and before Princess Trill could recover herself sufficiently to resist, or raise her voice to call for help, she had drawn the mask of Spite's face from under her cloak, and fastened it tight on under the hapless bride's golden hair.

The transformation wrought in that instant was so complete, and withal so ludicrous, that Pious Hypocrisy laughed very much like Spite in a mood of high gratification, and then asked the Princess, who was quite unaware of her own appearance, and only felt a little



stiffness about the mouth, if she could carry back any thanks or compliments to her venerable relative.

Princess Trill said "No," being only anxious to get rid of her disagreeable visitor, and to return to her friends as quickly as possible.

"Then I will bid you farewell; and if you remember any message after I am gone, you can come down into Elfin Wood, and seek me near the hollow trunk of the Ash-Tree, in which Old Woman lives with her little Maid Brisk." And with that the Stranger from the Country pretended to retire, but in reality she only hid herself behind the window-curtain to witness what sort of a reception Princess Trill would receive when she presented herself before her companions, with Aunt Spite's face.

She met a very strange and rude reception indeed: Mother Dignity stared with stupid amazement at her audacity, and the young Maids of Honour began to titter and whisper to each other, saying—"The ridiculous, ugly old *thing!* and to come tricked out for all the world like a *bride!* Gossamer of silver, and white roses from the Enchanted Bower! Well, I'm sure, *they* will go out of fashion if Aunt Spite is to be allowed to come to Court in them. Oh, what a perfect fright!"

Princess Trill saw the skittish looks, and heard the hard words all round her, but she said meekly, "Mother Dignity, give me my veil, we are keeping Prince Glee waiting."

At this all the assemblage burst into a peal of laughter, and Mother Dignity bounced out of the bower, shrieking, "Aunt Spite has come to Court, and impudently claims to be sweet Princess Trill!" and then fell into violent hysterics.


In a moment came running Prince Glee, the Queen, Prince Goldheart, Muffin, the Royal Pages, and a vast body of people besides ; but as one after another they caught sight of the grinning mask of Aunt Spite in the doorway, they stopped short and hung back. Prince Glee betrayed the utmost anger and disgust both in his countenance and his expressions. He turned away from the unhappy Princess with a scowl of aversion, while her Majesty spoke on the instant, and with the utmost severity.

“Spite, you are forbidden to appear at Elfin Court on any pretence : if you are not out of sight in five minutes, you will be removed by the Guards to the Lock-up,” said she.

Then was the Princess reduced to despair ; she turned and fled, everybody falling back from her steps as if her robes were tainted ; and as she came to the gates Wink put a bucket in her way, over which she stumbled and fell prostrate. Instead of helping her, the sentinels only laughed, and nobody showed any sympathy for her fate except Dapple and Worry, who seemed puzzled, for they came and licked her hands and feet ; but when they saw her face, they ran back howling disconsolately. And when the Princess regained her feet, almost blind with tears and utterly heartbroken, she went her way down the glade of Elfin Wood ; and at the moment her foot crossed the threshold of the Palace, all the fairy joy-bells in Sheneland suddenly ceased ringing, and Old Woman, who was spinning as usual at her doorway in the Hollow of the Ash-Tree, lifted up her head and listened, saying anxiously, “There ’ll be no wedding to-day ; the fairy-bells are silent !”

No sooner had the supposed Aunt Spite been thus

•



ignominiously driven away, than Prince Glee cried out, in great haste and heat, "Where is Princess Trill?" and immediately Mother Dignity recovered and bounced into the bower, and called—"Princess Trill! Princess Trill! the benevolent Stranger from the Country must spare you now, for Prince Glee is waiting for you!"

But no Princess Trill was there to answer; and Mother Dignity fainted flat on the spot. Then came in Prince Glee, and the Queen herself, and Prince Goldheart, and all the Maids of Honour, and all the Royal Pages, and the excitement grew and became tremendous.

They searched the Bower through and through; they went over the Palace from one end to the other; Prince Glee crying all the time on the name of his dear Princess, and imploring her to answer him. But it was all in vain. There was no wedding that day, for there was no bride, and all Elfin Court was thrown into mourning.

Still the quest went on unceasingly; but night fell, and the Princess was not found. Then said Prince Glee, "It is her Aunt Spite again who has beguiled her away; by this time, no doubt, she has her locked up in the dimmallest dungeon of Castle Craft!" And his heart sank within him, for the grief and disappointment of his loss were very hard to bear.

Fairy Queen was troubled beyond expression at this dolorous ending to her scheme of happiness, but after a little talk with Prince Goldheart, she touched the bereaved Prince Glee on the shoulder, and said, "Take heart, my Cousin, to-morrow you shall have a band of Guards, and you shall set out to effect the deliverance of the sweet and hapless Princess. Tufsongbo returns



to-night from his mission to the Puffraspabi and the Alicompagni, and he will accompany you."

So Prince Glee went to bed, and while he was sleeping, the benevolent Stranger from the Country bound Princess Trill hand and foot and carried her away through the wildest wilds of Elfin Wood, far beyond Castle Craft, and left no trace behind her.

CHAPTER XL.

PRINCE GLEE AND TUFLONGBO SET OUT IN PURSUIT,
OF PRINCESS TRILL.

THE next morning Prince Glee arose with a heavy sense of misfortune on his mind, and as soon as he was dressed he went away to the stables, to see that his darling steed, Swift-and-Sure, which had helped him in his flight from Castle Craft with the rescued Princess once before, was in condition for a long and arduous journey. On the way he fell in with the great Traveller Tuflongbo, wearing his cloak of peacock's eyes, and they immediately got into conversation. Tuflongbo condoled with Prince Glee on his bereavement, and said, if it would be any consolation to him, he would show him a new beetle, which he had discovered in the country of the Puffraspabi; but poor Glee declined the entomological specimen, and replied that he had no heart for anything but setting out in pursuit of the lost Princess; and that now he was on his road to see that his beloved Swift-and-Sure was fit for the journey.

"My dear fellow, this is a secret service; let me



earnestly advise that you go on foot," exclaimed Tuf-longbo. "Whether a journey be taken for pleasure or for business, you cannot have too few encumbrances. If I could travel with nothing but a walking-stick, I should enjoy myself twice as much!"

"But when I find the Princess, how am I to escape with her?" asked Prince Glee.

"Trust to the chapter of accidents, as I do!" replied Tuf-longbo. "My excellent fellow, do you suppose I should have discovered the use to which the Old Moons are put if I had thought about how I was to descend from the high wall of stone and brick at World's End, after I had got to the top of it? Should I have found the Alepivi, and introduced their delicious fruit and golden honey into Sheneland, if I had waited for a boat to carry me across the sea that was three sights over? Should I now have brought home a signed treaty of commerce with the Puffraspabi and the Alicompagni, if I had not ventured through the hedges of cactus, prickly pear, and fretful porcupine with which they fortify their country? No, thrice NO, my Prince!" And in the vehemence of his eloquence and demonstrations Tuf-longbo rose on tiptoe and expanded visibly.

Prince Glee caught his enthusiasm, and turning back to the Palace, he said he would just pick his band of Guards, and be off immediately.

At this Tuf-longbo's face expressed some disgust and contempt. "*Guards!*" said he, curling his lips, "what do you want with *Guards?* My dear Glee, you may be a Prince, but, excuse my plain speaking, you are certainly a *goose*. If you want to be betrayed, take a long tail with you; if you want to give Aunt Spite warning when you are at hand, take a trumpet, perhaps

two would be better, and a kettle-drum or so! Guards! Why, didn't the Knights-Fairy turn and leave you the last time when they met the Grand Pomp and Queen's Heralds proclaiming a Ball at Elfin Court?"

"Truly they did," replied Prince Glee, despondingly.

"Then what dependence can be placed on them again? Feather-heads that forsake the path of honour and enterprise, to dance to a fiddle with one string! Now, seriously, Prince Glee, if you mean to find Princess Trill this time, you must have done with all nonsense. You must leave your royalty behind you; you must dispense with Guards and beloved steeds; and you must take ME with you, as Fairy Queen suggested to you last night, and to me also, in an interview that I had with her for the purpose of presenting the gifts and homage of the Puffraspabi and Alicompagni."

"Dear Tuflongbo, your advice and your companionship are the best in the world," cried Prince Glee, gratefully. "Come, let us start at once!" and the impetuous Prince tried to twist the Great Traveller round towards the glades of Elfin Wood; but Tuflongbo was not prepared for this. His experience in many lands had taught him to be a philosopher, who never hurried or worried himself, or started on any enterprise without looking well to his shoes, his staff, and his inner fortification.

"My excellent fellow, I *can't* go without breakfast," said he, deprecatingly. "I'm not in love, if you are; and, besides, I have only my slippers on."

Prince Glee sighed, yielded reluctantly to Tuflongbo's representations, and permitted himself to be led back to his apartments to breakfast. Tuflongbo gave bachelor breakfasts every morning when he was at home; and very free, easy, pleasant entertainments they were. His



friends dropped in to hear and tell the daily news in the most unceremonious manner; even the Queen herself would come, with Prince Goldheart, and the grave Professors, and, in short, everybody that was delightful. As it had got abroad that the popular traveller was to accompany Prince Glee in his pursuit of Princess Trill, his apartments were crowded with his acquaintance to take leave of him, and while he was still in the middle of his first cup of tea, Fairy Queen came in with Prince Goldheart and Mother Dignity, who looked very flabby after her two severe attacks of illness the day before.

"We are sorry to lose your society at Court so soon, Tuflongbo," said her Majesty, graciously; "but the value of your company to our cousin, Prince Glee, will be so great, that we are ready to resign you for his sake. We wish you every success; and for the furtherance of the object you have in view, our faithful servant, Elf Transformation, has this moment sent a Magic Button, which Mother Dignity will now sew upon Prince Glee's coat. When the Button is Buttoned, the Prince will become invisible; when his coat flies open, then he will appear as he does now."

Then Prince Glee sat down on a low stool, and Mother Dignity sewed the Magic Button on his coat, and, by the Queen's orders, buttoned it; upon which the stool where the Prince had been sitting but a moment before became vacant, and Wink kicked it away into a corner. All the company laughed, but Tuflongbo cried out, "Come, Glee, unbutton your coat, and let us look at you again!" and immediately Prince Glee reappeared, looking exceeding small.

"It was rude of you to kick away the stool," said he to Wink; "if I had not been very agile, you would have

sent me into the corner too." So Wink apologised for having thoughtlessly insulted a friend in misfortune, and then harmony was restored, and the Prince took a cup of tea.

When breakfast was over, Tuflongbo said they had better lose no more time ; so his knapsack was brought in and strapped on his shoulders, and Prince Glee's knapsack was brought in and strapped on his shoulders; then the Court Cobler came in, and examined their shoes; and Prince Goldheart presented each of them with a new walking-stick, and they went out at the Palace Gate, with the Queen and all the Court shaking hands with them. Spy and Watch had been removed for neglect of duty as sentinels, in allowing Princess Trill to be carried off; but Dopple and Worry still hung about the steps, and when Prince Glee appeared, they ran to him, and licked his hands, and looked up in his face with tears in their eyes, and said, as plain as dogs could speak, "When you see dear Princess Trill give our love to her, and tell her we are very sorry."

And so the Travellers departed; Mother Dignity, at the last moment, recovering sufficiently from a sudden attack of spasms, to throw an old shoe after them for luck.

CHAPTER XLI.

PRINCE GLEE AND TUFLONGBO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF GIANTS.

WHEN Prince Glee and Tuflongbo set out in pursuit of Princess Trill, they first followed the windings of the glade that led past the hollow trunk of the Ash-Tree in

which lived Old Woman and her little Maid Brisk. They were both at home ; Old Woman spinning in the doorway, and little Maid Brisk sorting out the pink, and blue, and purple, and yellow silk of flowers for Fairy Court-dress. Tufiongbo stopped and asked if they had seen anybody going by that way lately.

"There has been nobody this morning," replied Old Woman, "but late last night two people passed just as Brisk was setting out to gather rays."

"What were they like?" asked Prince Glee, with eager curiosity.

"One was short and lean, with a broad fat face, full of creases of smiles. She wore a sad-coloured cloak, and a hood over her head."

"Ah! that was the benevolent Stranger from the Country," said Prince Glee.

"The other was tall and slender, and had Aunt Spite's face, crowned with roses, and robes of silver gossamer."

"Yes ; that was wicked Aunt Spite herself, dressed up to come to Court"—

"Yet she wept and cried bitterly, and her voice was the voice of Princess Trill," said little Maid Brisk. "I followed them to the Enchanted Bower, and heard it all the way."

"And the robes she wore were the very same robes I spun and wove for Princess Trill's wedding robes. The pattern was new, and I recognised it in a moment," said Old Woman, turning her wheel.

"My mind misgives me about that benevolent Stranger from the Country," remarked Tufiongbo. "I do not believe in benevolent Strangers from the Country. I am of opinion that this person with a broad fat face,

and creases of smiles, in a sad-coloured cloak, and with a hood over her head, was a benevolent *Sham* from the Country, Prince Glee! Benevolent Strangers from the Country are not often seen in company with Aunt Spites. And I have my doubts about this person with Princess Trill's voice, and Aunt Spite's face, and Princess Trill's bridal crown and robes, being Aunt Spite at all."

"Don't speak in riddles, Tuflongbo, I implore you. If you are a clever fellow, prove it, and tell me what you believe!" said Prince Glee.

"I believe this, Prince Glee, and I'm sure of it!" replied the Traveller, wagging his head significantly. "I believe the benevolent Stranger from the Country was Aunt Spite herself in the mask of Pious Hypocrisy, and that the tall slim thing in roses and silver gossamer was your own lost Princess Trill, half stifled under a mask made on the model of her Aunt Spite's own villainous countenance!"

"You are a shrewd fellow, Tuflongbo," cried Old Woman, approvingly. "You have hit on the truth. I have not sat by the roadside all these thousands of years, taking note of this, that, and the other, without being able to see through any disguise those mask-sellers, Specious, Plausible, and False Pretences may invent. The benevolent Stranger from the Country *was* Aunt Spite, and the slim thing in the roses and silver gossamer *was* Princess Trill, weeping and heartbroken at being dragged away from Court and her dear Prince Glee."

"I drove her forth; I, blind bat, mole, porpoise; I drove her forth!" cried Prince Glee, distractedly. "Tuflongbo, what will be the end of this?"

"The end of it, my dear fellow, will be, that after

various adventures, and various difficulties, we shall discover Princess Trill, that she will forgive you, and that you will marry her, and live happily ever afterwards!" replied Tuflongbo, encouragingly.

"I am desperate! I, cruel monster, who loved her; I turned from her with aversion! The Queen addressed her severely, and I stood by; the Maids of Honour laughed at her, and Mother Dignity did not box their ears; Wink put a bucket in her way, and I did not kick him into the middle of next week! Oh! Tuflongbo, can she forgive me that? Can she, I say, forgive me *that*?"

"She wore Aunt Spite's face, and you did not know her—*that* will be your excuse, Prince Glee; therefore be comforted," said Old Woman, kindly.

But Prince Glee would not be comforted; and when they left Old Woman and little Maid Brisk at the house made in the hollow trunk of the Ash-Tree, he buttoned up his coat, though Tuflongbo remonstrated with him, and said he might as well be walking with a *ghost* for company as with *him*, if he would be so churlish as to make himself *invisible*. He indulged his sorrow for ever so long, but as Tuflongbo walked fast, and the sun was now up, he soon became heated, and after struggling with his feelings, he at last unbuttoned his coat, and became visible again.

"You are not a bit like yourself, Prince Glee; laugh and be merry!" urged Tuflongbo, pleasantly.

So Prince Glee brightened up, and they beguiled the way with cheerful conversation, until they came to the spot where Idle lay bound amongst the nettles, with the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils keeping guard over her. Tuflongbo divided the nettles,

and looking in at the miserable little captive, said, "Idle, you have your ear to the ground, and can hear a long way off. Did the two people who came by last night, just as little Maid Brisk was setting out to gather rays, take the road that turns down beyond the Enchanted Bower into Tangle Wood?"

"No," replied poor Idle. "I heard them, but they did not go into Tangle Wood."

"Did they follow the clue through the maze to Castle Craft?" asked Tuflongbo.

"No. Oh, no! They did not go to Castle Craft. They went through Rockpass towards Wildwaste, and then I lost all sound of them amongst the storms and earthquakes that are perpetually raging there."

"Then her Aunt Spite has carried Princess Trill away into the Country of the Giants!" exclaimed Tuflongbo, greatly dismayed, and he and Prince Glee sat down and looked at each other for ever so long without speaking another word.

And well they might; for indeed it was no common adventure to go to the rescue of a Stolen Princess in the Country of the Giants. Tuflongbo himself, though so ready to make light of difficulties, was the first to admit this.

"I did not expect to have to penetrate through Rockpass and Wildwaste, Prince Glee," was his remark. "This is a very different style of thing to going on a scientific discovery, or a peaceful mission to such tribes as the Alepivi, Puffraspabi, and Alicompagni."

"So I suspect we shall find it, Tuflongbo," replied Prince Glee, seriously.

"I have gone through some dangers in my time, but I never encountered a Giant with only a walking-stick



before," said Tuflongbo. And then he and Prince Glee took another long stare at each other, and spoke never a word for nearly an hour.

While they were thus loitering away their time, the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils had slyly let down some of his cords, and tied Prince Glee's ankles together; and he was just about to play Tuflongbo the same trick, when that sharp and active traveller sprang to his feet, and flung a stone up at the grinning, ape-like creature, which caught him on the nose. He then released Prince Glee, and said they had better be moving on; for they should never rescue Princess Trill by sitting there mooning at each other; and, accordingly, they were just setting off when poor little Idle cried out plaintively from amongst her nettles, "Tuflongbo, have you got anything good to eat in your knapsack?"

"Yes," said Tuflongbo; "I have got fruit of Alepivi and golden honey."

"Oh! do give me a spoonful of golden honey, it is so long since I tasted anything nice," implored poor Idle.

So Tuflongbo knelt down and put a spoonful of golden honey into her mouth, and then he gave her half of a fruit of Alepivi; but she could not get her hands loose to take it, and as soon as the Great Traveller and Prince Glee were out of sight, the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils came down out of the Tree and ate it before her face, saying at every bite, "Oh, Idle, how *luche de plaw* it is!" *Luche de plaw* being his peculiar idiom, signifying "how extremely delicious!"

And Prince Glee and Tuflongbo went on their journey again until they came to the Enchanted Bower blooming all over with wild white roses.

Tuflongbo stopped to examine it, and asked Prince Glee if he had ever come out there on Midsummer Eve with Fairy Queen's procession, to celebrate the Solemn Festival of the Maids from the Country under the Sun. Prince Glee had witnessed the ceremonial, but Tuflongbo had not, so the Prince gave him an account of it, and just as he came to the lot-drawing, a golden olive was flung to him by an invisible hand, and a voice in the air said, "So long as thou hast that golden olive, Prince Glee, thou wilt know neither hunger nor thirst."

"What a good gift!" said Tuflongbo; "our honey and fruit of Alepivi will soon be exhausted when we come to Wildwaste."

And after that the travellers went on again, gradually leaving behind them the lovely sylvan glades of Elfin Wood, where the birds sang like music, and the fairy-bells rang in the moist and shady places, and the little springs bubbled up with joy in the sunshine.

At first the trees became few and scattered, and the grass scorched and brown; then there was not even a bush to shelter a fly, or a blade of green upon the thirsty rocky ground. The sky overhead was darkened like a black hood, and a long miserable wind blew out of the east and almost cut the travellers in two. Prince Glee's first impulse was to button up his coat, but Tuflongbo implored him to forbear. He said he had *not* heart to go through Rockpass and Wildwaste with an invisible body beside him, so Prince Glee let his coat fly wide open, and endured the bitter blast with silent fortitude. He was growing stronger and more courageous the more difficult appeared his task of rescuing Princess Trill, and after he had stood against that cruel east wind for a little while, he felt that no danger could daunt him



afterwards, and Tuflongbo expressed himself as feeling the same sense of exhilaration and valour.

And now the road began to ascend, and to climb up, up, and up the steep stone-encumbered side of a hill lost at the top in thick clouds; and by and by it also began to wind and to grow so narrow, with great towering cliffs on either hand, that the travellers had to separate and proceed singly. Then did Prince Glee feel thankful for the advice the experienced Tuflongbo had given him to leave Swift-and-Sure and the Knights-Fairy at home, for they would have been of far more hindrance than service to him now.

Prince Glee went first, and as he went his brave heart expanded, and turning round to Tuflongbo, who was behind him, he said, "Now know I that I follow on the track of sweet Princess Trill, for my breast swells with hope and anticipation."

"That is the way to look at it," replied Tuflongbo, puffing sorely; "it is well to be jolly under all circumstances; and so, dear Prince, don't you think we had better sit down under this pleasant precipice, and have our dinner?"

Prince Glee acquiesced in this sensible proposal, and after they had refreshed themselves with fruit of Alepivi and honey, they again trudged on their journey. The farther they went now, the higher grew the precipices, until they could scarcely see daylight; and Tuflongbo said that they would soon come to the worst part of the Rockpass, and that Prince Glee might thank his stars he was young and slender, and not of such a mature plumpness as himself. And, indeed, Prince Glee did thank his stars, for before long they had to slip through the pass sideways, and from the groans of

Tuflongbo it was clear the business was no joke for him. But the plucky, magnanimous little fellow made light of it, and when Prince Glee sighed a little too, he cheered him up with that golden proverb from the wisdom of the Country under the Sun, "Faint heart never won Fair Lady!" and Prince Glee remembered the lovely Princess Trill, and pushed on with redoubled ardour.

They had been travelling for about two hours in this arduous manner when they were both obliged to stop and take breath, and Prince Glee asked Tuflongbo if it was possible that her Aunt Spite could have brought the sweet Princess by this terrible road.

"There is no other way," replied Tuflongbo; "so it it is a comfort to reflect that the Princess, being tall and slight, would slip along easily, but Aunt Spite would be worse off than I am."

Then Prince Glee moved along again, with Tuflongbo following close behind, and at length the Rockpass began to open out, and all at once they emerged upon Wildwaste. Wildwaste was a vast gray tract of land, without a sign of vegetation upon its surface; gloomy hills beyond hills enclosed it; the sky overhead was one arch of thunder-clouds, and the air was full of dismal voices of Storm and Tempest, most awful to hear. They could see no living object far or near, but as they advanced cautiously into the exposed country they saw the earth continually heaving and opening around them, and the great scattered rocks quaked thereat like mere feathers.

"How that sweet heart Princess Trill must have trembled amidst these horrors!" said Prince Glee, under his breath; and for very pity he could almost have wept to remember that, in addition to these ex-



ternal sufferings, she had had to bear besides the recollection of his cruel words and looks of aversion. "But I'll make it up to her, I'll make it up to her, Tuflongbo, when I once get her safe out of her Aunt Spite's clutches, and carry her away to the pretty bower in the Isle of Palms!" cried he, fervently, and he stepped over the stony ground of Wildwaste as if he were but just starting quite fresh in the morning. Tuflongbo could hardly keep up with him, and at last he was obliged to call a second halt.

"We shall not get much farther to-night, Prince Glee," said Tuflongbo, as they sat down to rest in the midst of the weary waste; "it is not safe travelling here after dark. Do you hear how the north wind is getting up?"

"I hear it. And Tuflongbo, am I mistaken in thinking I see one of those great rounded hills slowly moving towards us?"

Tuflongbo started to his feet, sprang on a stone and looked out. As he looked, his face paled, and dropping softly down beside the Prince, he whispered, "We must be off, Glee; that moving hill is no other than Giant Slouchback, and he certainly is coming this way."

So up jumped Prince Glee, and they were just going to put their best foot foremost and scurry off, when a huge hand was stretched out and caught each of them by the nape of his neck. They had been sitting in the lap of Giant Slink, and never knew it until they were seized in the vice of his finger and thumb, and crammed down into a deep dungeon of a pocket. Their hearts beat audibly, but in the darkness of their prison each grasped the other's hand, and vowed to be faithful until death; which event seemed not very far distant.



Prince Glee and Tufongbo captured by the Giants. P. 268



When he had got the hapless travellers safe, Giant Slink set off trotting at the rate of three hundred and sixty-five miles an hour, and was presently joined by his brother Giants, Slouchback and Lumba. Up hill and down dale, it was a sorry shaking poor Prince Glee and Tuflongbo had in Slink's pocket, until he reached the great cavern in which he lived; when, to add to their miserable discomfort, he immediately sat down to supper with Slouchback and Lumba, and left them to take their chance of being smothered in their dungeon.

The talk of the Giants over their supper was like the rumbling of thunder, but when Prince Glee grew accustomed to their voices, he distinguished his own name and that of Tuflongbo, and presently made out that Aunt Spite had retained these three Giants in her service, and that they had got Princess Trill shut up somewhere very safe indeed. He learned also that Aunt Spite, having thus made her poor niece secure, did not propose to remain in Wildwaste, but was going home to Sheneland by the earliest opportunity. It appeared, however, that it was necessary to consult her as to what should be done with the new prisoners Giant Slink had caught, so Slouchback went out and called her, and presently the wicked old thing appeared wearing her Mask of Pious Hypocrisy.

Neither Prince Glee nor Tuflongbo could resist the temptation of creeping up to the top of Slink's pocket to look at her, though they knew death would be the instant penalty if they were discovered; and the moment they saw her, they both recognised the benevolent Stranger from the Country.

"We have brought you the two little birds you sent



us to net, Aunt Spite; what are we to do with them?" inquired Giant Slink.

"Let me peep at their pretty faces," said Aunt Spite, grinning eagerly.

Upon that Slink plunged his hand into his pocket, and pulled out Prince Glee and Tuflongbo, and set them on the supper-table, where their malignant enemy was also standing. She bowed to them derisively, and made them a complimentary speech on the issue of their enterprise, recognising Tuflongbo as the distinguished Traveller, and begging to know from Prince Glee how a fairy felt waiting to be married without a bride. This was extremely irritating to their feelings; but what could they do but endure in patience? When she had thus mocked them for some time, Giant Slink repeated his inquiry, as to how he was to dispose of his prisoners—the one she had brought, as well as these two fresh ones.

"They can all sing; make lark-pie of them," answered Aunt Spite, and the creasy smiles on her face expanded from ear to ear at the brilliancy of the suggestion. All the Giants, too, roared with laughter, and declared it was a capital idea.

Prince Glee could not put up with this any longer, so he buttoned his coat, and becoming invisible, he flew at Aunt Spite, and tore her cap from her head; he tweaked her nose, he boxed her ears, he wrung her neck, he pummelled her from one end of the table to the other, and concluded by knocking her head-foremost into Giant Slouchback's dish of soup, where she would inevitably have been drowned, had not he, checking the convulsions of mirth into which her eccentric movements had thrown him, picked her out, shaken her dry, and re-



marking that the old Fairy had evidently been making too free with the contents of their cellar, put her up on a shelf to recover; which she did very slowly, for she was old, and her constitution would not stand many more such violent assaults.

Tuflongbo had witnessed Prince Glee's spirited conduct with keen delight; and as soon as he unbuttoned his coat and again stood visible on the supper-table, he intimated his approval and admiration by significant gestures; for it was not desirable to speak at present.

When Aunt Spite had been put up on the shelf out of the way, the Giants went on with their supper, and discussed the lark-pie that was to be made of their prisoners with greedy gusto; Tuflongbo reflecting in his own mind with some satisfaction as he listened, that *he*, at all events, should be a tough morsel, and certain to give anybody that ate him severe indigestion. When they had finished, Lumba said, "Shall we make the pie to-night?"

"No; we will make it in the morning; I am sleepy," said Slouchback. "Leave little Trill in her cage, and put these two pretty birds down in the well where the old black cap is that Slink caught last night. He shall go into the pie too, for he has a famous tongue."

And as that was agreed to, Slink took his luckless prisoners by the small of the back, and dropped them through a chink in the floor down, down, down into the dark bowels of the earth; and when they recovered the shock of their fall, they found themselves in a damp and oozing well, from which most of the water had drained away; and an old feeble fairy, in a black cap and sable cloak, was sitting there in the deep silence and solitude, peering so anxiously through a little hole in the wall,

that he did not notice the arrival of his companions in misfortune, who sat down side by side, and bewailed their dismal fates with bitter anguish.

CHAPTER XLII.

PRINCE GLEE AND TUFLONGBO, IN THE GIANTS' WELL,
CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THE FACE OF MANNIKIN HOPE.

PRINCE GLEE and Tuflongbo had been going on for ever so long in this disconsolate manner before the old Blackcap heard them; but as soon as he caught the sound of their lamentations, he turned about and questioned them of their names and circumstances. Tuf-longbo told him all, and he said he had heard sweet Princess Trill singing mournfully in a cage far overhead; but as for his making one in the lark-pie, he did not believe it, for he had just seen the face of Mannikin Hope through the hole in the wall.

He then proposed that the Prince and Tuflongbo should endeavour to catch a glimpse of him too, so the Prince knelt down and applied his eye to the hole. After he had gazed through it earnestly for several minutes, the Blackcap asked him what he saw.

"I see a crowded road, with thousands and thousands of persons all going one way," replied Prince Glee: "some are running, tripping, stumbling; some grope as if they were blind; some have fallen, and do not attempt to rise; some dance; a few go leisurely, but directly and many saunter as if they knew not whither they are going. But all their eyes look towards the sunsettin

and all have but one end to their journey. Tell me, Blackcap, whither they are all travelling."

"They are going through Sheneland to Shadowland," replied the Blackcap; "look amongst those who stumble and grope, and especially amongst those who are fallen, and tell me what thou seest besides."

"I see some persons offering them help, and one seems the most in earnest who has a bright, steadfast visage," replied Tuflongbo.

"He of the bright, steadfast visage is Mannikin Hope. Now, draw back to let thy companion behold him too."

So Prince Glee withdrew his eye from the hole in the wall, and Tuflongbo looked through and saw what he had seen.

"Make your minds easy now," said the Blackcap; "if you have caught a glimpse of Mannikin Hope, neither you nor Princess Trill will be put into lark-pie. Mannikin Hope is a trustworthy fellow; he had a fault once, and that was, he thought too much about himself; but, having journeyed through Sheneland to Shadowland, he has learned wisdom, experience, and unselfishness, and now devotes himself solely to the service of others. Shall I tell you his history to beguile the night?"

The Prince and Tuflongbo thanked him, and he began as follows:—

THROUGH SHENELAND TO SHADOWLAND.

"In the Chief City of Sheneland there once dwelt a Cobbler, a crooked, little man, with a big head, and buckles to his breeches. Now, for all this Cobbler was little, and crooked, and wore buckles to his breeches,

court fashion, he had a very kind heart, and the poor folks came to him for bread whenever they had nothing to eat in the cupboard at home. And so the reputation of the Cobbler went out to the ends of Sheneland, and he had great fame and favour amongst the Fairies, whose country it is.

“And it happened one day, when the Cobbler was mending shoes, sitting on the bench below his window, he heard a little piping voice in the street outside, moaning and saying, ‘Here is winter coming, and I have a long way to go—winter is coming, and I have a long way to go!’

“So the Cobbler got up from his bench, and, looking out of the window, espied a boy in thin clothing, without a bit of shoe to his foot, or a bit of cap to his head, and his pretty eyes full of tears.

“When the boy saw the kind Cobbler watching him, he said again, even more plaintively than before, ‘Winter is coming, and I have a long way to go!’

“Then cried the Cobbler, ‘Come in, my little Mannikin, and rest thee by my fire until the winter is over, and afterwards I will speed thee on thy way.’

“And be sure the little Mannikin came in, nothing loth; and when he was warmed, the good Cobbler began to ask him of his home and friends.

“‘Whence art thou, little Mannikin; and who are thy kinsfolk that have sent thee to travel so far alone?’ questioned he.

“‘I come from the Country under the Sun, and my kinsfolk are all far ahead of me on the road; if I do not overtake them by the way, I shall most likely find them at the end of it,’ replied Mannikin. ‘They have gone through Sheneland to Shadowland, and I follow.’



“ ‘I am making that journey myself,’ said the Cobbler; ‘but I am drawing near to the close of it now.’

“And all that winter, while the snow was on the ground, and the Frost-Elves and Storm-Sprites were working their bitter will over Sheneland, the little Mannikin sat by the Cobbler’s fire; and the Cobbler fed him, and clothed him, and made him a pair of new shoes. When the shoes were finished, the Cobbler set little Mannikin before him, and gave him the following tender advice:—

“ ‘Thou seest these shoes, Mannikin, that they are square-toed, that the soles are double, and that there are nails in the heels. If thou takest heed to thy steps, they will last thee all the way thou hast to go, let it be ever so long or ever so rough. And when thou comest to the gates of Shadowland, where thou wilt rejoin thy kinsfolk, thou must put them off, and leave them outside. Thou wilt have no further need of them.’

“And the little Mannikin promised that he would remember.

“ ‘Listen again, for I have more to say unto thee,’ the Cobbler went on. ‘These shoes are square-toed for Comfort, they are double-soled for Strength, and they have nails in the heels for Endurance; and thou wilt require them all. And now go; make ready thy wallet, for in the morning thou must be gone.’

“Then little Mannikin was very sorrowful at the thought of leaving the good old Cobbler with the big head and the buckles to his breeches, and he prayed him that he might stay with him a little longer.

“ ‘It cannot be,’ replied the Cobbler; ‘Spring is here, and thou hast thy journey to make. Besides, I am going

to my rest. I have finished my work, and have no more leather.'

" 'But I will call thee in the morning,' said Mannikin.

" 'I should not hear thee, though thou call never so loud,' answered the Cobbler. 'By the morning I trust to be safe in Shadowland, for I have been travelling very long, and am right weary.' And with that he turned his face to the wall, and fell asleep.

" Little Mannikin understood not what the Cobbler meant, but he betook himself woefully to his chamber, and packed his wallet, and set it by the door, ready to start in the morning. And then he sat down by the tired old Cobbler, who had sheltered him through the winter, and fed him, and clothed him, and Mannikin's heart grew so big as he remembered all his kindness that he could not refrain from weeping. He had not wept long, however, when a Tiny Thing hopped upon his foot, and cried cheerfully, 'On with thy shoes, Mannikin—the new shoes, square-toed, double-soled, and with nails in the heels; for the sun is coming up, and it is time to be setting off on thy journey. The Gate of Youth has been open since the dawning, and thou hast had leisure enough to make ready.'

" So little Mannikin gently touched the Cobbler, to make him say Good-bye; but the Tiny Thing hopped upon his hand, and plucked it hastily away.

" 'Let him rest,' whispered she; 'did he not tell thee that he had finished his work, and had no more leather?'

" But Mannikin still lingered, and his sobs and cries filled the house: 'He will not hear thee, though thou lament never so loud,' said Tiny Thing, gently; 'be comforted, Mannikin; he has reached the quiet rest of



Shadowland, and thou wilt find him there with thy kinsfolk when thou reachest thy journey's end.'

"Then Mannikin, with one last look at his kind old benefactor, put on his shoes, slung his wallet on his back, and went out of the house, the door of which instantly closed behind him. In his grief and haste he had shaken off the Tiny Thing, but he had not gone many paces when he heard her calling after him: 'Carry me with thee, Mannikin—carry me with thee.' So he waited a moment until she overtook him, and hopped upon his shoulder.

"'Thou art no great weight,' said he, caressing her.

"'I shall bear the half of all *thy* burdens,' was Tiny Thing's answer. 'Thou wilt travel much more lightly with me than if thou wert to leave me behind. For I am Cheerfulness, and I am good company for wayfarers through Sheneland to Shadowland, whether they be young or old, rich or poor. Mind, therefore, Mannikin, that thou lose me not.'

"And so they went through the streets of the city from the Cobbler's House; no man taking any heed to them; and Tiny Thing singing like a bird in Mannikin's ear:—

'Mannikin, be of good cheer, good cheer,
Mannikin, be of good cheer!'

"Then she changed her note, and sung:—

'A merry heart goes all the way,
And lightens the longest and darkest day;
Mannikin, be of good cheer, good cheer,
Mannikin, be of good cheer!'

"And Mannikin, though he never forgot the kind old Cobbler with the big head, and the buckles to his breeches, began to remember him with less sadness;

and when he reached the gates of the city, there was such a press of young men and maidens going out like himself upon their journey, that he had quite enough to do to take care of his wallet, and of Tiny Thing on his shoulder, without thinking at all.

“Everybody seemed to be in haste, and Mannikin caught the infection of their hurry. Throughout the morning he pushed on with the crowd, tripping, stumbling, bruising himself, and missing many a beautiful sight which he might just as well have enjoyed. He gave no help to any who were less strong than himself, and hardly heard the offers of kindness and companionship that were made to him, for he was thinking peevishly what a long way he had to go, and distressing himself in vain by previsions of all the ills that might befall him ere he reached his journey's end. Tiny Thing had to sing in his ear again and again to warn him :—

‘Fairly and Softly went far in a day,
Hurry and Hotfoot soon lost their way!’

“And then Mannikin would slacken his speed, and take rather more heed to where he set his feet; but though by noon he was much wearied and heated, he never thought of sitting down to rest, and consider his doings, until there overtook him an old Graybeard, who said to him kindly,—‘Whither away so fast, Mannikin?’

“‘To Shadowland, father,’ replied Mannikin.

“‘Thou wilt reach it none the sooner for thy haste,’ said the Graybeard, solemnly. ‘Take thy time, or thou wilt have many false steps to recover, and false ways to retrace. Sit here and listen to the voices in the air a little while’—

“‘They can teach me nothing. I have a long way to go ; I pray thee keep me not,’ pleaded Mannikin.

“‘But the Tiny Thing whispered in his ear: ‘Most haste, worse speed, Mannikin. Harken to Graybeard, and rest. I have felt thee limping twice already. Is there not a sharp stone in thy shoe?’

“‘Now, Mannikin had felt a pebble galling his heel for some miles back, but he had hardly thought it worth while to wait to take it out: at Tiny Thing’s bidding, however, he plucked off his shoe, sought it, and flung it away. Meanwhile, the Graybeard questioned him of his journey; whence he had started; whom he had met by the way; what he had done, and what he had seen?

“‘I started from the house of the old Cobbler with the big head and buckles to his breeches. He had finished his work and had no more leather, and in his sleep he passed away to the rest of Shadowland.’

“‘I knew the Cobbler,’ said the Graybeard. ‘He was a friend of mine, and my most honest counsellor.’

“‘He was a friend of mine, too,’ added Mannikin. ‘He sheltered, clothed, and fed me; and when I was to set off on my journey, he gave me these excellent shoes.’

“‘The best gift he could have given thee,’ replied Graybeard. ‘I am glad that thou hast talked with Gratitude and Thankfulness about him, for that is good for thy conscience. Never-forget is the salt of all benefits, Mannikin, and see that thou keep good store of it. But, except Tiny Thing on thy shoulder, thou hast no companion. How is that? Hast thou out-walked the crowds who thronged thee early in the morning? Did none offer thee their fellowship?’

“‘I saw some who would fain have joined me, but

they proceeded so slowly, I soon left them behind. I remembered that I had a long way to go.'

"'So have they, Mannikin, and thou shouldst have helped some of the weak ones along with thee. It would have lost thee no time. What were their names whom thou leftest behind upon the road?'

"'There was Careful, who never stepped unless he were sure to step on solid ground, and though he came out this morning from the City-gate with myself, he had hardly a speck on his shoes; but I came straight on, and sometimes the path was very miry.'

"'So I see,' said the Graybeard. 'O Mannikin, those clogged shoes of thine will be lead to thy feet before thou reachest Shadowland, unless Good-deeds will set about rubbing off some of the mire. But whom didst thou pass besides Careful?'

"'I passed Brotherly Kindness and Charity, helping some sick folk who were cast out of a city where there was the plague. They called to me to lend a hand, but I told them I had still a long way to go, and that if they wished to get to Shadowland by nightfall, they had better mind their own business and come along.'

"'O Mannikin, short-sighted art thou! They were good angels from Shadowland, sent thence, in company with Mercy, to help all who fall into trouble. Thou shouldst have joined thyself to them. And who besides these didst thou pass upon the road?'

"'I saw Friendship, but I told him I wanted no help; and Love with a bleeding heart, but I had not time to bind her wounds; and Avarice, who went a little way with me, and then dropped behind; and Confidence, whom I trusted, and who got me the worst fall I have



had yet ; and Knavery, who first deceived and then beat me : and now it is noon and I am growing faint, though I have still a long way to go.'

" 'So thou hast, Mannikin, and a dreary, seeing thou hast chosen to leave those behind who would have been pleasant company. If thou hadst taken Friendship by the hand, he would never have left thee ; and if thou hadst dressed the wounds of Love, she would never have failed thee of comfort.'

" 'I have just seen one companion who, I think, would suit me,' said Mannikin.

" 'What is his name ?' asked the Graybeard.

" 'Self-Help,' replied Mannikin.

" 'A presumptuous, conceited fellow is Self-Help, though his company is better than none,' said Graybeard ; 'but I warn thee, Mannikin, that he will put thee on doing many things without either honour or profit ; and when thou hast accomplished them, he will be the first to sneer and ask thee what good they are of ? I wish that thou hadst taken Love and Friendship instead, for the sun grows hot in the afternoon, and there are many dark and dangerous places before thee. Thou hast not done well, but thou hast done according to thy light ; so now I will wish thee good speed. I blame thee not ; but remember, after Experience has spoken with thee, thy conscience must bear the follies of the time future.' And so the Graybeard went on his way, and the little Mannikin on his ; and Mannikin felt sadder at heart even than he had done when the old Cobbler turned his face to the wall and fell asleep, because he had finished his work and had no more leather.

" Tiny Thing peeped round and beheld his sorrowful

countenance, and it subdued her so much, that for ever so long she had no heart to sing; but at last she began very softly, as if trying how he would take it:—

'Past is the past, Mannikin, past is the past,
Thou canst not undo it;
Work thy best from first to last,
And thou wilt never rue it.
Wisdom comes with wisdom teeth,
Experience with gray hair;
Self-help a lusty helper is,
And I'll stave off dull Care.'

And to Tiny Thing's great satisfaction, his visage cleared again, and he called, in a manful voice, for his new comrade to come up and walk along beside him. So Self-Help advanced, making loud professions, and looking very stout and determined; and they trudged on abreast until they came to a wide open common, where many roads crossed like a network of chalky lines amongst heather and furze-bushes. There was nothing to shelter them from the glowing heat, and Self-Help by and by turned sick and faint, and wanted to go back; but Mannikin said, 'No, there could be no going back,' and they kept on for a long while, never making much progress, however, for they got confused in the maze of roads, and without being aware of it, returned again and again on their steps. Twice they had passed some great gray stones, from below which gushed and gurgled a little spring, whose sparkling waters had worn themselves a channel in the moor, and went singing on their way without ever ceasing, though the sun was hot enough to dry up even the rivers in the lowlands. Mannikin took off his shoes, and laved his feet in the cool water, for they were very much swollen

and painful in the extreme ; and while he did it, Self-Help, who had been the real cause of his going by all these roundabout ways, which led nowhere, sat behind him in the sulks, scolding and chafing mightily. Mannikin tried not to listen ; but he could not shut his ears, and he was forced to hear himself called by many hard names, which were most of them true. Self-Help remembered, now that it was too late, that he might have taken counsel with Forethought about these new regions which he had never travelled before ; but rather than acknowledge that his conceited presumption had been his false and wearisome guide, he preferred to seek a scapegoat on whom to lay the blame, and told Mannikin pettishly that it was all his fault.

“Mannikin was much annoyed, and would very likely have given way to anger himself, had not Tiny Thing begun to sing, in her soft, cooing tone,—

‘Patience, Mannikin, wait a while,
Who is this that cometh ?
Peace in her sweet eyes,
Faith in her grave smile,
Who is this that cometh ?
Meet her, Mannikin, arise, arise !’

And looking down by the watercourse, he saw advancing towards him a fair woman, with a frank front and great beauty of face.

“‘Who art thou?’ asked Mannikin, regarding her tender countenance very wistfully.

“‘I am Affection, the younger sister of Love,’ said she.

“‘If thou art going my way, come with me,’ Mannikin besought her.

“‘Why didst not thou take Love for a companion?’

I know thou didst meet with her early in the morning,'
said Affection, with tender reproach.

" 'I met her, but she was sorely wounded ; her very heart bled, and I thought I had not time to bind up her wounds, for I had then a long way to go. Canst thou tell me if she is healed? She had a face like heaven: it haunts my dreams day and night. Scarcely knew I how fair she was until I had left her; and then, though I sought her carefully, sought her with bitter tears, never have I found her again—never since I started on my journey have I found anything so beautiful as the morning face of Love, as I first met her in the sunny lanes of Youth. It was a cruel hand that struck her. O Love, Love!'

" 'She is dead, Mannikin ; lament is vain. Thou wilt see her no more until thou enterest into Shadowland, where all things are forgotten. But give me thy hand I will help thee as well as I can, though I am neither so strong nor so patient as my sister was.'

" Then sang Tiny Thing in Mannikin's ear—

'Love was lovelier, Mannikin,
Love was lovelier far:
But hold Affection fast, for she is good
And helpful where life's darkest passes are.'

" And so Mannikin, Affection, Self-Help, and Tiny Thing went on their way again. For some time they kept by the pleasant watercourse, where the sun had less power, because of the breeze from the water ; and presently the heat began to decline, and the shadows to deepen and lengthen, until, when they came to the outskirts of a great forest, it seemed that the twilight had suddenly fallen. Mannikin began to fear that they had

lost the track once more, but Affection gently reassured him.

“‘It is the approach of evening, but we are on the right road, Mannikin,’ said she. ‘There is not far to go now, for already we are on the borders of Shadowland.’

“To hear this cheered Mannikin exceedingly ; for it seemed a weary while since the poor old Cobbler, with the big head and buckles to his breeches, had set him off on his journey, and gone to sleep himself, because he had finished his work and had no more leather. Tiny Thing was very tired too, and chirped so feebly now, that he could scarcely hear her ; and Self-Help lagged often, and was near fainting by the time they came out of the wood at the other side : but Affection still held him by the hand, and when he complained of his fatigue or of the weight of his wallet, which galled his shoulders, she bade him look up. And when Mannikin looked up, he saw before him a range of lofty hills hung over with mists and vapours of darkness, but overhead the star-lamps of Shadowland shone faintly through the clouds.

“‘Leave here thy wallet, Mannikin ; thou canst not climb the hill with that on thy back,’ whispered Affection ; but Self-Help urged him to carry it farther, and he struggled hard to do so, but could make no way at all ; and at last he said, ‘Take it off, take it off ; it is only stones ;’ and Affection loosed the bands, and it was left at the wayside. When Mannikin began to mount the hill, he found that from his shoes he had lost half the soles of Strength, that the square toes of Comfort were broken into holes, and that most of the nails of Endurance had fallen out ; but Affection led him by the easiest places, and encouraged him with many good words.



“And at last he heard a strange voice speaking, which said, ‘Mannikin, put off thy shoes; they are worn out, and thou hast done with them.’

“Then the warm clasp of Affection was loosed from his hand, and he was suddenly enwrapped in the dark mist wreaths, and all the perils and sufferings of his journey through Sheneland were forgotten. And he was alone. Affection stood weeping below the cloud; Self-Help had dropped down beside the wallet of stones; and the last he heard of Tiny Thing was her little voice singing farewell to him far away in the distance.

“And all at once he was in Shadowland, and there was the old Cobbler with the big head and the buckles to his breeches, and his kinsfolk who had arrived before him, waiting to welcome him.

“‘Thou art here sooner than I expected, Mannikin,’ said the good Cobbler. ‘I had many fears for thee, when I heard that thou hadst left behind thee Charity and Brotherly Kindness, Love, and Friendship. Who were thy guides, since thou wouldst none of them?’

“‘I chose Cheerfulness, Self-Help, and Affection,’ replied Mannikin.

“‘Thou mightest have chosen better; but since thou hast made thy journey, thou must needs want rest. Did my shoes wear well?’

“‘They lasted me until I came to the verge of Shadowland, and the One Invisible bade me put them off, for I had done with them.’

“‘As they wore well, they must have been made of sound leather. Many poor travellers stumble and hurt themselves, because they have started on their journey without shoes, or shod only with some poor stuff, which

soon drops into rags amongst the stones and thorns. It is amongst such poor, bare-footed, crippled travellers that Charity and Mercy find so much work to do. Thou shouldst have thought less of thyself, Mannikin, and have gone to help them. The saddest and most wearied of wayfarers goes on his way rejoicing, when he sees the face of *Hope*.'

" 'I will return. Send me now, for I am ready,' cried Mannikin, penitently.

"And the old Cobbler took him at his word, and suffered him to go back into Sheneland to do his neglected work. And that is why, in the darkest abodes of Sheneland, and in the roughest roads by which men, as they go to the solemn Shadowland, must journey, Hope is always to be met, with a steadfast face, waiting on Mercy and Charity, and sometimes stretching forth a hand and helping those poor creatures, who may never be found out even by them. For Hope has made the journey himself, and he remembers his shelter in the Cobbler's house through the winter, and what a long way he had to go when he left it; and he knows that he can cheer the faintest and weakest on the weary road.

"And so he does; for there are now few homes so dark that he cannot brighten them, and few hearts so heavy that they have not a welcome for Mannikin Hope, the faithfullest guide of travellers through Sheneland to Shadowland."

When the excellent old Blackcap had finished his story, he was almost fainting with thirst; so Prince Glee kindly gave him the golden olive to suck, and he and Tuflongbo both tasted it too, and were marvellously

refreshed ; after which the Prince restored it carefully to his knapsack.

It was now getting towards morning, and the three captives down in the well naturally began to feel very anxious as to their fate. Tuflongbo kept himself the easiest, for he was a philosopher, and found distraction in watching and speculating upon the strange multitudes whom he saw through the hole in the wall hurrying along the road, through Sheneland to Shadowland.

“What a worry and fuss they make over trifles,” cried he, in grieved amazement ; “and, at the same time, what golden opportunities for good do they pass by, as if they were nought ! How the empty pates go tip-toeing along in serene self-complacency till they fall into a bog, and how some of the worthiest go limping in the ruts. It is a queer way this, a very queer way through Sheneland to Shadowland !”

At this point, Tuflongbo's philosophic meditations were cut short by Giant Slink roaring out from above, “You three little birds down there, fly up and be made lark-pie of !” and, thrusting his great hand through the chink of the floor down into the well, they were obliged to hop upon his outstretched perches of fingers, and so were lifted up into the cavern where the Giants had supped the night before. Slink then pinioned them, and put them into the pie-dish all in a row, and told them to sit there quietly until he brought the other lark that was to go into the pie with them. Tuflongbo whispered that he was afraid it was all up with them now ; but Prince Glee could only think of his approaching re-union with Princess Trill. Mournful as the circumstances would undoubtedly be, he felt in his own mind that it would be happier to be made into a lark-

pie with her than to be separated *for ever*, and he knew that she would think the same. As for the Blackcap, he said nothing, for he was still out of breath with telling that long story down in the well.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOW THE GIANTS CHANGED THEIR MINDS ABOUT MAKING LARK-PIE OF PRINCESS TRILL, PRINCE GLEE, TUFLONGBO, AND THE BLACKCAP, AND WHAT THEY DID WITH THEM AFTERWARDS.

WHEN Giant Slink left Prince Glee, Tuflongbo, and the Blackcap, sitting in the pie-dish all in row, he went out of his cavern, and straight along under a gloomy wall until he came to a sudden turning, and heard a perfect flood of the most delicious melody swelling out upon the air. Passing round the corner, he looked up and saw Princess Trill in her cage, pouring out her heart in a song, sweet and full as a choir of nightingales, while Giant Slouchback and Giant Lumba sat on the ground below listening to her with open-mouthed surprise, their big hands embracing their big knees, and their eyes staring with rapt admiration. Giant Slink was almost paralysed with wonder, but he dropped down on a stone beside his brother Giants, and listened too.

Princess Trill now showed her own lovely face, for Aunt Spite had economically reflected that, as she was returning to Sheneland, she might as well take her mask with her, where, perhaps, she might sell it at half

price ; this was the first time the Giants had seen the Princess without the mask, and the effect her beauty had upon them was very remarkable. Not until after they had listened to her sweet singing three days and three nights did they remember their other prisoners, whom they had left sitting in the pie-dish all in a row, and Slouchback proposed that they should be brought and made to sing too. So Slink went back to the cavern, and returned with the pie-dish under his arm. Then Lumba, who was by far the most good-natured of the Giants, took Princess Trill out of her cage, and set her on his hand, and Prince Glee beside her ; and when they flew into each other's arms and rapturously embraced, he declared they were such a pretty little pair it was a shame to separate them ; and with that he put them back into the cage together, and the two began to sing such a transporting song that the three Giants were almost crazy with delight.

Meanwhile, Tuflongbo and Blackcap had also been caged together, and when Princess Trill and Prince Glee ceased singing they began to chatter, and, if truth must be told, to quarrel too, as learned friends will ; for Tuf-longbo now discovered that Blackcap was a stray member of the Royal Society of Wiseacres of Sheneland, whose specialty was ancient history and mythology, and they were naturally jealous of each other's distinction. The Giants listened a little while to them also, and then Lumba said—"These are talking birds ; we will keep them too. They will be great fun, and Aunt Spite will never know. She must be half-way through Rock-pass by this time, and there are birds enough to be caught without making lark-pie of such clever birds as these."





Battle of the Giants

And his brother Giants agreed with him, and the poor captives all began to sing together in exultation at their reprieve, in a way even more bewitching and bewildering than before. All Wildwaste echoed with the melody, and other Giants came trooping from far and near over the hills, and sat down circle beyond circle round the cages, with their big hands clasping their big knees, and all their eyes staring with rapt admiration at lovely Princess Trill, in her robes of gossamer, silver, and wild white roses, and Prince Glee in his smart wedding-clothes and the Magic Button on his coat. It was a very wonderful and imposing scene, as beheld from Tuflongbo's cage; and he took particular note of all the details, that he might be able to give a flourishing account of it to the Fairy Queen and her Court whenever he and his fellow-captives escaped from the dreadful Country of the Giants, and returned to Sheneland.

Now, unfortunately, the Giants were rather quarrelsome fellows amongst themselves, and when they had had singing enough, they got upon their feet and began to fight, probably for amusement and variety, but very much, nevertheless, to the terror of Princess Trill. Prince Glee took the utmost pains to reassure her, and said it was a magnificent spectacle—he had never expected to see a Battle of the Giants; but she trembled all over, and wept for fear. Meanwhile, all the vast plain of Wildwaste quaked under the rush and stamping of their heavy feet; their hoarse cries resounded like shocks of thunder, and their ponderous blows fell like sledge-hammers on each other's bones. Tuflongbo was in ecstasy. He sat down on the floor of his cage, and clapped his hands; he cheered the Giants on with shrill

cries of approbation, and promises of how he would glorify their mighty deeds in his next volume of travels; but the feeble old Blackcap groaned and sighed, and said, "Oh! how he wished he were in his peaceful study in sunny, quiet Sheneland! Could not the Giants settle their differences with their tongues as Wisacres did?"

The Giants having once begun to fight never ceased until it became dark, and by that time the ground was covered with their wounded, but in the dead of the night they all contrived to creep away, without the poor caged captives being aware of it; and when the morning broke there was nobody in sight but Slouchback, Slink, and Lumba, who had fallen asleep under the wall, and were snoring horribly.

"I wish these lazy fellows would wake up," said Tuf-longbo, impatiently; "I see no fun in staying here, and, besides, I am hungry."

Prince Glee, overhearing that, passed the Golden Olive round, and everybody was much refreshed thereby; so much so, that Princess Trill herself proposed that they should rouse their mighty jailers with a morning song. And they all began and went on until first one of the big fellows and then another opened his eyes, yawned, stretched himself, and staggered upon his feet, in anything but a pleasant temper.

"It is the little birds!" grumbled Slouchback; "what a row they make! Slink, you had better put them down the well again, I can't stand this; or else go and make lark-pie of them, as Aunt Spite said."

"Nay, nay, I have a better thought than that," replied Slink; "you remember that old bird-fancier who lost his way in Rockpass last year. I'll carry them



over the mountains, and sell them to him. He is always seeking new birds to sing in Elfin Wood."

"But Aunt Spite will find it out, and say we have broken our agreement," suggested Lumba.

"Who cares for Aunt Spite? I wish we had made crow-pie of *her*; for, would you believe it, Slouchback? she gave us Bad Money," said Slink.

"Bad Money!" roared Slouchback. "Ah! that comes of dealing with anybody who wears the Mask of Pious Hypocrisy."

"If I knew what would vex her most, I'd set about doing it directly!" cried Lumba; "the double-faced old cheat!"

And so said all the Giants, and then they sat in a ring on the ground, sulkily contemplating the three brass tokens Aunt Spite had passed off upon them for genuine money. The Captives had heard their discourse with lively interest; and hardly could Tuflongbo restrain himself from making suggestions of revenge to them, but Prince Glee signed to him authoritatively to hold his tongue and go on listening.

And presently Slouchback took up one brass token and Slink took up another, and Lumba took up the third, and they spun them through the air over the farthest range of black mountains, and where they fell they became stagnant lakes in the Water-World. After that they got up, and Slouchback said: "I wonder what would vex Aunt Spite most," in such an anxiously reflective tone, that Tuflongbo could no longer keep himself from breaking forth into the wildest suggestions. He said, "Hang her, give her to the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils; lock her up in her own ancestral mansion of Castle Craft; hand her



over to Clutch in the Enclosed Garden on the borders of Sheneland, where the sun never shines; let Quip, Crank, and Wink have the custody of her in the Royal Lock-up;" but Giant Lumba interrupted him with the reminder that they had not got Aunt Spite there, and so could not put her through any of these penalties; on which Tuflongbo lapsed into a very depressed state of mind, from which he was only roused by hearing Prince Glee say, in a cheerful tone: "I know what would vex Aunt Spite most;—it would vex her most to see Princess Trill and me married, and living happily ever afterwards!"

On hearing that, all the Giants sprang upon their legs, seized the cages, and set off at a famous swinging trot towards Rockpass. Arrived there, they opened the doors, and freed their prisoners, bidding them creep through and make haste, and go and vex Aunt Spite to the utmost. So Prince Glee and Princess Trill, and Tuflongbo and the Blackcap took their leave of the amiable Giants; but before they went, Tuflongbo begged to inquire if there was anything he could do for them in Sheneland; but as they are dull fellows, and not quick at imagining, they only rubbed their heads and said, "No, they did not know there was."

"But I say, Old Fellow, do you know the taste of fruit of Alepivi?" asked the Traveller, with winning familiarity. "Do you know the flavour of Golden Honey, of Puffrasp and Alicompane?—you *don't!* Then I'll give you a treat, come here to-morrow at this time—neither earlier nor later—and here you will find three carpet-bags stuffed with those delicious commodities. And when you have once tasted them, you'll remember Tuflongbo, your benefactor, as long as you live."



And when he had said this, he slipped into Rock-pass after his companions, and in a very few minutes, they had got through, and were speeding merrily on towards the Enchanted Bower, hardly able to believe that it was true, and that they had really been permitted to depart unharmed out of the awful Country of the Giants.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE RETURN OF PRINCE GLEE, PRINCESS TRILL, TUF-LONGBO, AND THE BLACKCAP TO ELFIN COURT.

WHEN the four escaped prisoners reached the Enchanted Bower, all the fairy bells throughout Sheneland began to ring their loudest and fastest.

Her Majesty was at dinner at the moment, but immediately she rose up and commanded a royal procession to go out and meet the Prince and Princess.

“There will be a Wedding to-day, and let every one be ready,” said she; and as soon as the Grand Pomp had marshalled his Heralds, Banner-bearers of poppy silk, and Trumpeters, all the Court poured forth and fell into the procession, the Queen herself going first on her white butterfly, and the miscellaneous crowd of royal officials bringing up the rear. Mother Dignity was in a dreadful flutter, and Worry and Dople were wild with joy as they scampered off in advance of everybody, and presently they came to the house made in the hollow trunk of the Ash-Tree, where lived Old Woman and her little Maid Brisk. They were hard at work as usual, but at the Queen’s command the procession paused, and her Majesty asked :

"Have you seen Prince Glee and Princess Trill pass by this way?"

"No, but they are coming, Fairy Queen, they are coming, and Tuflongbo and an old Blackcap with them," replied Old Woman.

Then the Royal Procession moved on again, and stopped next where poor little Idle lay amongst the Nettles, with the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils keeping guard over her. Her Majesty looked down at the unhappy prisoner, and asked again: "Have you seen Prince Glee and Princess Trill pass by this way?" and Idle answered: "No, Fairy Queen, but they are close at hand, with Tuflongbo and a Blackcap."

And directly afterwards the returned prisoners and the Royal Procession met.

Then Fairy Queen descended from her butterfly, and embraced sweet Princess Trill, and her Cousin Prince Glee, and commanded the Knights-Fairy to form double lines on either side of them that they might be conveyed safely back to Elfin Court. The Queen and Princess Trill went first, and by the way the Princess related to her Royal Mistress what had befallen her since she was carried away by her Aunt Spite in the Mask of Pious Hypocrisy. And Prince Glee followed behind with Prince Goldheart, and told his adventures; and Tuflongbo told his, and made the most of them, and the Blackcap said to his brother Wisecacres that what had happened to him elucidated certain mysteries of the ancients, and that he would make them a solid quarto volume about it in the course of the next hundred years.

And when the Royal Procession reached the Palace



the whole Court passed straight into the Grand Hall, which was crowded in every corner to see the Wedding of Prince Glee and Princess Trill, who advanced with her Majesty and went up the steps of the Dais of Beauty. The fairy bells were ringing rejoicingly all the time, and everybody said to his neighbour that it was a most inspiring event.

Then the Queen placed the Prince and Princess one on each side of her footstool, and bade them join hands, and Mother Dignity fussed about the sweet bride, and covered her with the veil of silver gossamer, after which the Grand Pomp ordered a blast of trumpets, and Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, proclaimed silence. Then rose Fairy Queen from her Golden Throne, and with Serene Majesty, spoke as follows:—

“These are our beloved Cousins, Prince Glee and Princess Trill, who have escaped the persecutions of their enemies and the perils of Wildwaste. They now profess their mutual love and affection in the presence of Elfin Court, and who shall *dare* to say them *Nay?*”

And then her Majesty paused and looked round and saw, standing on the Stool of Penance, where Catch and Keep had placed her, the Benevolent Stranger from the Country who had been brought to Court to witness festivities, but this time against her will. Fancy, the Court Moralist and Story-teller, and Stern-visaged Truth were standing near her, and at the Royal Address her broad face full of creases of smiles was seen to quiver like jelly. But she dared not accept the challenge, or deny the love of the Prince and Princess. She knew that her day was over for good, and that they would be married now in defiance of all her machina-



tions. And as nobody spoke, her gracious Majesty continued :

“If there be any more true lovers in this my Court who would now desire to betroth themselves in the presence of this dignified assemblage, let them approach the Dais, and stand before my footstool below Prince Glee and Princess Trill.”

At that announcement, a thrill of joy and surprise ran through half the fairies present, and immediately there was a good deal of whispering, and blushing, and coaxing, and nonsense — all which her Majesty tolerated with infinite patience for some time ; but at length it became tedious, and she remarked to Muffin that, as it seemed no one else was going to be married that day besides the Prince and Princess, perhaps they had better proceed. But no sooner had she spoken than there was a general commotion and movement towards the Dais of Beauty, and a great flutter amongst the Maids of Honour and Royal Pages.

The candidates for betrothal now pressed forward so fast that Muffin had more than enough to do to marshal them in pairs ; but when the task was accomplished, and the Queen looked round upon the youth and beauty of her Court, kneeling before her, she saw that Frolic and Clipsome had joined hands ; that Dump and Touchy had done likewise ; that Wink had got little Dot ; that Tippetty Witchet and his brothers had chosen the lovely sister Elves, Posy, Dove, and Poppet ; that Trip, Try-for-it, Finick, Turn, Twist, Lush, and Trap were proposing to mate themselves with Blue-Bell, Satin, Sleek, Sly, Flip, Arch, and Dimple ; and that Tippet was hunting about for a bride, and getting himself refused by everybody. The last to approach



the Dais were Snip, Snap, and Snarl, who had been judiciously selected by the sour Professors, Birch, Cane, and Ferule, who looked very much satisfied with their choice. They rather spoil the effect of the group of youth and beauty clustered round the Throne; but her Majesty courteously accepted their promises, and they were married along with the rest.

Then Tippet, being left to himself below, whispered to a friend that, for *his* part, he was sure the bachelors had the best of it in the long run, and that he was thankful to have escaped the snares of the young Court beauties; and his friend replied, "No doubt of it." He knew the taste of sour grapes himself, and quite agreed with Tippet.

And when the august ceremony was over, there was a general murmur of satisfaction; all the blessed pairs stood up, hand in hand, smiling and blushing, and looking as proud and as bright as May-day; but Prince Glee and Princess Trill looked happier and lovelier than any of the rest, and at the provoking spectacle the Benevolent Stranger from the Country opened her mouth and gave utterance to a screeching yell of rage, which rang from one end of the Palace to the other. At this startling breach of Court Etiquette, Fancy gave the signal, and immediately Truth raised his hand and plucked the Mask of Pious Hypocrisy from her face, and behold it was *Aunt Spite*.

Then orders were given to remove the prisoner, and she was shut up in a dark van, where her friends, Slander, Mischief, Gossip, Idlewords, Wrinkle, Whisper, Sneer, and Twaddle had already been secured, and they were all carted off to the Enclosed Garden on the borders of Sheneland where the Sun never shines;

where they were presently joined by Pickle, Prig, and Slumph, and the Wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with many Tendrils, who had been commanded to set Little Idle free, on account of the information she had given to Prince Glee and Tuflongbo when they were setting out in pursuit of Princess Trill. She afterwards took service with Professor Birch's wife, and has unlearned many of her lazy ways.

After these obnoxious characters had been got rid of, Fairy Queen issued her Royal Mandate that everybody should be happy; so they adjourned to the Hall of Dancing, and there was a magnificent Ball, which went on until there was a magnificent Supper; after which all the company danced again, till they had hardly a leg to stand on.

And the wedding festivities were kept up for six weeks, with Plays, Pantomimes, Magic Lanterns, Conjurers, Tumblers, Stories, Games, Entertainments, and all manner of Delightful Recreations.

CHAPTER XLV.

LITTLE CONTENT'S HAPPY DAYS.

NOW, at this time there lived in Sheneland a poor couple, who had but one child, a little son. This child came to them through the stormy dark of a wintery morning, and was as welcome to his father and mother as a flower of May. Their dwelling, which had been often gloomy and hushed before his arrival, was now never silent. He crowed and chirruped the livelong

day, and was as brisk and cheerful as any robin red-breast that comes hopping over the snow to your window-sill for his feast of Christmas crumbs. He was the light of his mother's eyes, and the joy of his father's heart; and all their neighbours who saw him smiled when they spoke, and went away the better and happier for having looked in his serene and pleasant face.

It was but a humble abode to which he had come, but it stood in the open sunshine; a slender rivulet babbled near it, and there were blossomed bushes growing all round and about, under which he would sit and play, while his mother did the work of the house, and his father was toiling in the forest. The tiny things in the grass were not afraid of him, neither were the feathered creatures that sang upon the bough. The wee insects, that only elfin spectacles can behold, all knew him, and would come out of their lurking-places to watch with inquisitive bright eyes, while the green crickets chirped close at his ear, and the scarlet lady-birds ran over his hands unharmed. The neat-capped daisies loved to bloom in his footsteps, and the wild roses, wherever they grew, blew him perfumed kisses as he passed by.

His mother and her gossips looked upon him with tender amaze when the wild things of the air came at his call, and nestled in his palm fearlessly; they said, "Surely he must be Fairy-Favoured." And so he was. When he seemed to be sitting alone, under the white-thorn by the brook, he was never without good company. Sometimes it was Tuflongbo, who, coming by that way on a journey, would put off his knapsack, and drop down beside him on the grass to rest, and while resting, he would tell him the story of his latest adventure in the floweriest style; or a diligent Blackcap, ever



ready to improve the shining hour, would pleasantly expound his lessons of wisdom, all the mustiness warmed out of them by the sunbeams ; or a troop of Elves would dance before him on a fern-spray, and flutter their wings like a cloud of butterflies ; or Fancy, the Great Court Moralist, would spin him a beautiful parable in rhyme, and leave it to sing in his memory for many a long day.

In all Sheneland there was no child happier than he, and he had the blessed gift besides of making happy all who knew him, but especially his parents, with whom he lived. When his father returned each evening from his wood-cutting in the Forest, he could tell whether his little son was coming to meet him by the whushing and whispering amongst the trees, and by the shimmering sweet sunshine that was scattered before him on the path. Then his load of fagots was lightened, and his heart in his bosom sang for joy.

The talk in the leaves grew livelier, and the sunshine brighter, the nearer he drew to home ; even the stones, in which there was not much beauty at other times, then showed him a mossy and varied colouring that was as lovely as a flower. His heavy eyes became clear, and when his little son appeared, and they rested on his countenance, they were as calm and full of peace as if they had never seen sorrow, and yet they had looked sorrow full in the face many and many a time before Content came to gladden him through the stormy dark of the wintry morning.



CHAPTER XLVI.

THE ARRIVAL OF FAIRY NETTLE.

ONE fine morning, about Midsummer time, when Content was but a little more than seven years old, Fairy Nettle, who had not been seen at the cottage since he was born, suddenly cropped up amongst the stones near the door, and began to talk to his mother in a fretful, querulous voice, which almost set his teeth on edge. He wondered who she could be, for her dull sharp face was quite strange to him ; but he did not venture to ask her name, because from the moment she appeared his mother had begun to look dark and angry, and to cast upon him such unloving glances as he had never seen in her eyes before.

He made no complaint, however, and only shrank into a gloomy corner of the house to hide until the Ugly, Wicked Fairy should be pleased to go away, and let the sunshine come in again through the doorway, which she quite blocked up with her coarse green cloak, spread abroad, and the white woollen cap on her head. His mother did not cease from her work, but she went about it with much impatient noise ; and in the midst of one of Nettle's stinging admonitions, she suddenly flung down an earthen pipkin that she happened to have in her hands, and dashed it into a thousand pieces.

Content felt as much hurt as if she had struck him ; but Fairy Nettle chuckled with delight and exclaimed,

“That is well done ! Only go on in that reasonable way, and it is certain to bring you prosperity.”

Content's mother replied that she was not so sure of



it ; and leaving the potsherds strewn upon the ground, she sat down in her accustomed place, folded her hands, and looked up drearily in the dreary face of her visitor, who forthwith stept over the threshold, and made herself quite at home in the cottage. Her presence filled it with a cold gloom that made Content shiver, and when he found her watching him with hard, malicious eyes, his very heart died within him.

But that was not the worst. Presently she opened her waspish lips, and began to say to his mother that he was but a poor reckling, not worth half the cherishing she had bestowed upon him ; and then his mother looked round at him, as if she had altogether forgotten how many years she had carried him in her bosom, and he had comforted her.

“ Yes,” Fairy Nettle went on, “ he is a mean-spirited starveling, who never deserved your foolish, fond cares. Let him go ; as long as he abides with you, you may have *enough*, but you will never have *great gain*. He will sit down satisfied with anything, and would say grace for a broken crust. Out on such a poor moony creature ! I would never call him child of mine.”

Content felt infinitely sad at hearing himself thus scorned and contemned, and he tried to creep stealthily up to his mother's side that he might pluck her by the sleeve, and recall to her memory how happy they had been together with his father before this evil fairy came ; but Nettle espied his approach, and pointed at him with a sneer, at which his mother scowled him away as if she hated him. On that Content fled out of the cottage, and left his mother alone with her wicked gossip.



CHAPTER XLVII.

LITTLE CONTENT IS SCOWLED AWAY.

As soon as Content was out of sight, his mother missed him, and felt a dragging pain at her heart, such as she had never experienced since before he was born. She gazed about uneasily for some traces of her lost darling, and then got up as if to pursue him, but Nettle stung her foot and lamed her so that she could not walk, and she dropped down on her stool again, covered her face and began to weep bitterly. Nettle said nothing comforting, but only asked, in a tone of mockery, what help Content had ever been to her that she need be so sorrowful for his loss?

"He was as merry as a lark, and he brought us good luck because he was fairy-favoured," said his mother. "Ah, the bright, bright face he had! it was better than sunshine in the house."

Nettle laughed. "Better than *Sunshine!*" echoed she, "but was it better than *Goldshine?* Content never allows his friends to grow rich; for he gives with both hands while other folks lay up. Remember that clever eldest daughter of your old neighbours, Service and his wife; remember *Clutch* and what *she* has stored in her Enclosed Garden on the borders of Sheneland. I have seen her bathe her hands in precious coin, as you might bathe yours in the running waters of the brook."

"But the sun never shines in *Clutch's* gardens, and *Whisper* says she is a martyr to rheumatism," replied the bereft mother.



“That may be true or it may not; Whisper sets afloat many a story without foundation; I should never be turned aside from an agreeable object by anything that *she* might choose to say.”

“Clutch let her little sister, Frail, perish in the snow, and shut the door on Waste, whom the wolves of the forest devoured in the night. My husband and I have sometimes seen Greed lurking about the house, but we never took him in; he makes people hard-hearted, and while I have a crust I must share it—for all the Goldshine in Sheneland I could not be so cruel as Clutch.”

“*Where is your little son?*” asked Nettle, with stinging significance.

“I have scowled him away! I have scowled him away!” was his mother’s bitter cry.

“Call; if you repent, perhaps he will come back,” suggested Nettle; but she knew he would not; she knew that by this time he must be far out of hearing.

“No, he will never come back; he has the tenderest spirit, a rough word scares him,” said Content’s mother, sadly. “I wish you had never shown your face here again; we were at peace and satisfied so long as you stayed away.”

“Don’t be ungrateful to an old crony; you have harboured me against your husband’s will often and often in past times,” replied Nettle; “and what is to hinder me from taking up my abode with you once more, now that Content is lost?”

“Let me go in search of my little son!” cried his mother, with a last desperate effort to defy her visitor and break away. But Nettle stung her again and again, and ended by subduing her so completely that she fell into a dark, sullen mood, and offered no resistance when

her unwelcome guest hung up her coarse green cloak behind the door, and began to make herself busy in preparing supper for the woodman when he should come home in the evening from his labour in the forest.

Several times his unhappy wife remonstrated with her for the disagreeable mistakes she was making in her cookery, but Nettle always took her up sharply with the question, "Am I the servant in this house, or am I not?" and, after a little quarrelling, Nettle invariably won the victory. She was much too ill-tempered a fairy to use it otherwise than ill; so she left the salt out of the porridge, though the woodman liked plenty of salt; and she made it almost black with pepper, though the woodman hated pepper; and finally, she let it burn on to the pan until the smell of it drove his poor wife out of doors for a breath of wholesome air.

When she felt the sweet wind blowing on her face, she thought of Content with sighs and tears. "My little son, my little son!" sobbed she, and strolled in and out amongst the flowery bushes where he was wont to sit, and down by the sparkling rivulet which he loved; but Content was nowhere in sight. Then she turned round to the cottage and smelt the smell of the burned porridge, and saw Nettle's sharp eyes on the watch for her. Nettle called aloud and she walked faster; but when she came to the door of the house, she stood to gaze for a moment at the glade down which her husband would soon be coming with his fagot of firewood on his back, and at the great forest which had been so beautiful in the morning; but, behold, *now* there was no sunshine there nor any light at all.

The giant elms stood up straight and tall; the weird, black poplars never stirred a twig; the spirit of the silver



birch was mute ; the royal oak wore his crown sternly ; the fair beech hung low her graceful arms ; the ash looked stiffened into knots of chains. There was not the faintest whisper in the crowded leaves ; the feathered creatures had ceased to sing ; nothing moved in the grass ; the elfin zephyrs had forsaken the flowers and ferns ; and everything was as motionless, as silent, and as gray as the overarching sky, upon which floated no cloud, though a black storm was hidden in its vault.

“It has become an Enchanted Forest of Stone !” cried the poor mother, in a sudden burst of repentant anguish ; “if my little son has fled into its dreadful wilderness, he will never, never find his way back to me any more.”

But Nettle caught her hand and pulled her indoors, and fretted and stung her so exceedingly that in her misery she forgot Content ; and as the hour of her husband's return drew near, her face grew as dark and forbidding as her companion's, and the shrewish tone of her voice promised anything but a pleasant welcome for the woodman when he arrived.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

LITTLE CONTENT'S FATHER DISCOVERS HIS LOSS.

ABOUT the time that Fairy Nettle cropped up by the cottage door, and first made her snarling voice heard within, the woodman was whetting his axe to cut down a tree, hollow at the core, which had been rent asunder by lightning, and now stood, a blasted ruin, on the

borders of one of the loveliest glades of the forest. It was so unsightly there, that he had resolved to remove it that very morning, but just as he raised his stout arm to deliver the first stroke at the decaying trunk, he heard a warning whisper from an Oleander that grew close by.

"Beware, Father Sorrel!" said Oleander; and then up came running that fussy busybody, Quamoclit, and cried,—

"Father Sorrel, oh, the mischief that is going on at your house at home! I advise you to leave your work and go back as fast as you can, or there will be a pretty account to settle between you and your wife to-night."

But the woodman had heard Oleander's warnings before, when it had turned out that there was nothing the matter; and, as for Quamoclit, *she* was such a notorious meddler in other folks' business, that none but idlers and fools ever thought it worth while to listen to her. So Father Sorrel turned a deaf ear to both, swung his axe round, and brought down a heavy blow on the rotten bole which made the forest echo again. In a very short time the tree was felled, and then, being heated with his exertions, he sat down to rest for a few minutes, and looked carelessly about him.

While he was hard at work he had not noticed it, but now he saw with surprise that the trees were slowly losing their colour and changing from green to slaty gray; the same with the flowers, the ferns, and the grass; the same also with the sky, which had been as blue as sapphire in the morning, when he had parted from his wife and his little son. Besides this, every sound was hushed, both of birds and creeping things, and the Oleander kept on chanting her mysterious "Be-



ware!" as if Dragon's Wort for snares were crawling all over the ground to catch the feet of heedless walkers. Quamoclit had gone away, and, for the first time in his life, the woodman wished he had listened to her, and asked what she meant by her strange warning and advice.

However, it was too late to question her now, so he turned to his work again, and began stripping the bark from the tree he had cut down. It was very hard labour, harder than he had ever before found barking an oak; and when he attempted to chop up the smaller branches to make his fagot of firewood, it was more like hewing stone than half-decayed timber. But he toiled on, as his custom was, until the hour of sunset; then he bound together his fagot of sticks, took his axe in his hand, and turned his steps wearily towards home. Oh, how heavy his load lay on his back! never had it lain so heavily before. More than once he was on the point of throwing it down to relieve himself; and, at every step he took, he debated within his own mind whether the labour that he was doing with so much zealous care, every day and all day long, were worth doing at all or not. And his load was not heavy on his shoulders only, it was heavy on his heart as well.

"Why hew down the trees with toil and sweat?" said he, gloomily; "if I let them stand, they will perish within by the slow decay of nature; and by and by, when they are decayed until they are as hollow as a reed, there will come a strong wind, before which they will fall as falls the red corn before the sickle of the reaper. I begin to perceive that my labour is nothing better than labour lost. I will lay my axe by and let it rust. He is a fool that beateth the air!"

There was no whushing and whispering amongst the leaves to-night, and no sweet scattering of sunshine upon the path; and by that he knew that his little son was not coming out to meet him. He lagged, therefore, and felt forsaken and unhappy; but, at last, he came within sight of his once pleasant home, and he quickened his steps, hoping that even then Content would run out with cheerful face to gladden him. But he slackened his pace again when he saw that the door was shut and the window quite dark.

That morning only, it had looked a pretty little cottage, standing in the sunshine, with the evergreen clematis covering its walls and roof; but now it was inexpressibly cold and dreary, and had an altogether poverty-stricken aspect. When he had cast down his fagot on the wood-stack, he drew near the door, opened it, and entered; but all his movements were languid and slow, as if he feared misfortune, but were desirous of deferring the assurance of it as long as possible. And misfortune, indeed, there was awaiting him.

His wife and Nettle were spinning. "Whirr, whirr-rr-rr," went the busy wheel, as if it were angry and meant to show it; but there was no kind smile or word of welcome for Father Sorrel. His wife never looked round; but he saw the potsherds strewn on the floor, and smelt the smell of the burnt porridge, and he knew immediately that his old enemy, Fairy Nettle, who had lived there before Content came to them through the cold dark of the winterly morning, must have returned, and have been in the house a considerable part of the day. That was why Oleander had bidden him beware, and why Quamoclit had advised him to leave off work and go home to prevent mischief.



“Where is the child?” asked he, his voice, even to himself, sounding hard and angry. His wife spun on, but never spoke. “Where is the child?” he repeated, in a louder key. Then Nettle turned and hissed at him, and said,—

“How should she know? he had gone out unbidden, and if he never came home any more so much the better.”

On that, a great storm broke overhead which shook the cottage to its foundations; the trees creaked and groaned in a fearsome way, and the heavy thunder rolled with hoarse reverberations through and through the Enchanted Forest of Stone. Quamoclit, who was always on the listen, especially when it was foul weather amongst her neighbours, had a pretty story to tell next day of a quarrel between Father Sorrel and his wife; but when she related how Content was lost, and Fairy Nettle had usurped his place, nobody found it a matter of wonder; and all kindly-disposed people were sorry for what had happened. One or two would gladly have gone in search of the child, but when they proposed it to the woodman, he bade them mind their own business; and they went away thinking that he was almost as much under the dominion of Fairy Nettle as his wife. And from that day forward no one but Quamoclit judged it advisable to meddle in their affairs.

CHAPTER XLIX.

LITTLE CONTENT FALLS IN WITH TUFLONGBO.

WE must now follow poor little Content.

When he fled out of the cottage before his mother's angry scowl, he ran down to the brook and waded across it to the further side. There the trees and underwood were very thick and dark—much thicker and much darker than in any of those beautiful glades up and down which he had been accustomed to go to meet his father. But he was too much pained and troubled to care whither he went, so that he escaped from the cruel looks and taunts at home; he, therefore, broke his way deep into the savage forest, never pausing or resting for a single moment, until his strength and his breath were completely spent; then he sank down under a bitter Aloe, and a quivering Aspen shook her leaves tremulously above his head and lamented for him.

Outcast and homeless, whither should he go? Where should he find shelter in his wanderings through this dreadful Enchanted Forest of Stone, when his own mother had driven him forth, careless whether he lived or perished? Solitary heath, mournful lichen, and weary moss covered the ground all about him; he was hungry, and tired, and inexpressibly sad at heart, but he saw neither food, nor rest, nor comfort anywhere.

How long he lay in this desolate place, sick and wretched, before succour arrived, he could never afterwards remember; but at last he perceived Balm, and



heard her mild words of consolation. She bade him rise up and eat some of the clustered purple fruit which Wild-grape, who is always charitable, had dropt down within his reach ; and as soon as he had satisfied his hunger, she commanded drowsy White Poppy to droop over his eyelids and lull him to sleep ; and he slept all through the awful storm which raged in the forest, and shook the cottage to its foundations, without being disturbed by so much as an echo of it.

When he awoke, it was high morning, and there, on a tall mushroom close by, sat our pleasant friend, Tuf-longbo, looking as brisk and active as was his wont when setting out on a new journey of adventures. The sight of the Great Traveller's familiar brown face was of infinite comfort to Content, and he was easily prevailed upon to lighten his own heart by pouring forth the story of his sorrows into that eminent man's sympathetic bosom. Tuf-longbo listened with much concern and many wags of his sagacious head ; and when the tale was ended, he observed that it was the strangest thing in Sheneland to see the ready welcome that was accorded to Fairy Nettle, even in the most respectable and honourable families ; though the misery she never failed to occasion was perfectly notorious.

“ I paid a visit this spring to Dump and Touchy, who were married at Court last year at the same time as Prince Glee and Princess Trill, as you may, perhaps, have heard,” said he, in his anecdotic manner. “ Fairy Nettle had arrived just before me, and though she had not been in the house an hour, she had already succeeded in upsetting everything. There was no dinner ready, though I was as hungry as a hunter ; and Dump had not a word of civil greeting for me. I never saw

so sulky a fellow in my life, and there was Touchy, his little spouse, with her back up, spitting and spiteful as the ugliest cat in Sheneland, whose reputation for bad temper has been handed down to us by tradition, and has passed into a proverb. There was company invited, three austere professors of learning, with their respectable wives, Snip, Snap, and Snarl, and I give you my honour, that to be rolled over and over in a bed of thistles would be a mere joke to what I endured that night in their society. I have been in a nest of hornets, I have more than once drawn on me the revengeful assaults of wasps, I know what it is to undergo an examination before a committee of incredulous, conceited Wiseacres, but my sufferings on those occasions were nothing to the tortures I underwent in Dump's country-house. You may imagine how thankful I was to take my leave of it; and I can assure you, my dear little Content—if the assurance will help to comfort you—that you, no more than myself, could ever have lived in peace and quietness under the same roof as Fairy Nettle.”

“Perhaps not, Tuflongbo,” sighed Content.

“There is no *perhaps* in the case—it is a certainty,” returned the distinguished traveller. “If your mother has chosen to take in Nettle to bed and board, *you* are much better away for a little while. She will miss you, and after a time she will most likely regret you. Then Periwinkle will drop in and remind her some sad night how much happier she was when you lived at home with her, and she will drive Nettle away; peaceful Olive will resume her visits as soon as Nettle is gone; and other kind neighbours, such as Sage, who is always wise, and Mallow, who is always gentle, and Mint, who

is always virtuous, and Hyssop, who is always cleanly, will come back again; and Rhubarb will give her the best of advice; and this best of advice will be that she should recall *you* and live with you and her husband under their roof thatched with evergreen clematis, just as you did before that ill-tempered Fairy Nettle cropped up amongst the stones by the cottage-door."

"How long shall I have to wander before my mother repents?" asked Content, sorrowfully.

"That I cannot tell you to a year or a day," replied Tuflongbo. "She has chosen to learn a difficult lesson, and it may take her a considerable time to learn perfectly; and she will find Experience much too strict and judicious a master to allow her to lay it aside while it is imperfect. But don't be down-hearted, you shall make a journey with me, and though we may fall into some troubles and difficulties, you will never feel so truly wretched as you would do if you went home now; for besides Fairy Nettle, your misguided mother has made friends again with that wicked Tamarinth, and greedy Auricula, and sour Barberry, and other people of their kind,—relatives of Spite, and Whisper, and Slander, whom our gracious Queen banished last year to the enclosed garden on the borders of Sheneland, where the sun never shines. I cannot but think it a pity that the act of amnesty to set them free again was passed. Goldheart, Glec, and I, opposed it with all our might, but Glib, Soft, and Slippery, talked about public rights, and progress, and fairy perfectibility, until the whole council voted with them, and we were left in an honourable minority. I have made up my mind never to meddle with politics again. They may govern Sheneland who will, but Tuflongbo will stick to his staff and



CONTENT FALLS IN WITH TUFLONGBO. 317

his wallet, and aspire to no higher dignity than that of her fairy majesty's famous astronomer and geographer, who discovered the use to which the old moons are put, and introduced the fruit of aplepivi, golden honey, puff-rasp, and alecampane, to the enjoyment of her faithful and loving subjects. That is surely glory enough for one decorated with the Order of Complacency, and the Grand Cross of Vanity!"

"Where are you going now, Tuflongbo, and what is your present commission?" inquired Content, insensibly recovering his spirits in the Great Traveller's cheerful company.

"I am going," replied he, "through this Enchanted Forest of Stone, and it is fortunate that I have fallen in with you—no one could help me more effectually in my discoveries; my journey is rather to investigate the ways and customs of the tribes who inhabit it, than to make research into its curiosities and natural productions—though, of course, that will not be neglected when it does not interfere with my more important object."

"In what direction do you go first?" asked Content.

"Before deciding upon that I must call a council of my followers," was Tuflongbo's answer, and clapping his hands twice very distinctly, there appeared on the instant a miscellaneous crowd of fairies, in every variety of garb and disguise.

Content was rather surprised at this, for he was aware that Tuflongbo liked best to travel with only his knapsack and his walking-stick; but it was clearly not his business to make remarks or ask questions now, so he sat by and listened intently while the motley council, with vast airs of dignity and solemnity, began to talk.

CHAPTER L.

TUFLONGBO'S COUNCIL.

DANDELION stood forth first, and proclaimed, in an oracular manner, that the council was opened. Immediately upon that, Betony, who was always astonished, and lived with his mouth open to express that state of mind, poked his fuzzy head forward over quarrelsome Valerian's shoulder, and said he *wondered* what would be settled as to Tuflongbo's travels; but Xanthium, provoked at the impertinent interruption, very rudely gave him a chin-chopper, which caused his teeth to close sharply on his tongue, like the snap of a purse, and brought the tears into his foolish eyes. Betony, thus discomfited, sat down again, and felt meekly surprised how a Fairy of position, like Xanthium, could be guilty of such a painful breach of good manners in an open Council.

This little interlude over, Abecedary, who had the gift of eloquence, put himself forward as leader of the talk, and after relating very diffusively every particular of the commission which the Great Traveller had received from her gracious Majesty the Queen, and the main objects of the journey on which they had all set out in such a goodly company, begged to know if any member of the band was desirous of suggesting improvements upon the original plan which the noble Tuflongbo had drawn up previously to leaving Court; for if so, he was ready to listen to them, and to take the amendments into consideration.

"Let us have the original plan laid before us once more," growled Bur, who was an importunate fellow, and a sad drag on the more ardent spirits of the band; for which very reason Prince Goldheart had made a point of his joining it. He would never go too fast himself, nor suffer anybody else to do so, if he could hinder it, and had acted as a life-preserver on many dangerous occasions, which were kept account of in the royal archives of Sheneland; he was an honourable person, and highly respected, and therefore Phlox, who agreed with everybody, knew he could not get far wrong in seconding his motion, which he did accordingly. The council cheered as with one voice, and then Dandelion begged Tuflongbo graciously to expound his designs to his devoted companions in adventure, and this he did without the least diffidence or circumlocution.

"I propose," said he, wagging his beard at Fig, in whose eyes he saw opposition and argument twinkling already; "I propose to follow the bent of my own inclinations."

"Exactly so—wonderful sagacity," murmured Phlox, with a smile of flattering approval; but Fig was so taken aback by the impudent simplicity of the plan, that he dropped down beside Betony as stupidly astonished as he, and found not a single word to say against it.

"It will be a fantastical game at follow my leader for us sober folk, Tuflongbo—couldn't you be rather more explicit?" asked Borage, while Sardony laughed ironically, and hoped his distinguished friend's whims would not take to crooked ways.

"There's no fun in straight roads and beaten tracks," cried Walnut, who was full of stratagems, and liked nothing so much as hairbreadth escapes.



"Of course not," added Arum; "let us risk all for honour and glory! Who cares for pickles? they are the spice of life!"

"No, no," expostulated Bur; "there is the dignity of the occasion to be considered; this journey is not a junketing."

"Let the dignity of the occasion go all down hill," shouted the impertinently witty Lychnis, shaking his red cap with laughing defiance at the elders.

"If old Bur does not put the drag on," sneered Sardony. Thereupon ensued much confusion, which did not subside until Tuflongbo rose, and with cheerful airs of congratulation expressed his thanks to the council for their assistance and advice, and issued orders for everybody to be ready to march at noon,—the lucky hour for starting on a journey through the Enchanted Forest of Stone, as the Nightshade Fairy who practises the arts of witchcraft in Sheneland had told Tuflongbo.

"Our halting place to-night will be where Chance directs," said the Great Traveller, before he dismissed the assembly; "but since we may possibly meet with dangers and difficulties, let Walnut keep his wits about him, and let Yarrow be well armed. Hawkweed had better go with the Vanguard, and keep a sharp look-out ahead, for Oleander has been here with a warning, and I have reason to believe that we shall have dark adventures before sunset. Golden Rod will accompany us for precaution, but every one must look to himself. Especially let me warn the ardent Arum, and his chosen friends, to beware of rash steps, for Dragon's Wort is known to grow profusely in this Enchanted Forest; and if they are once caught in its snares, they will have much ado to escape. Bugloss, in spite of orders to keep close

quarters, went out at daybreak on one of his spying expeditions, but let no one act on his reports; he is a lying fellow, and if he tells truth, it is unawares; so if you go by his information at all, go by the rule of contraries. Forewarned is forearmed, remember; Dandelion, the council is dismissed."

Then each of the members solemnly bowed to Tuf-longbo, and Tuf-longbo solemnly bowed to them, and the assemblage dispersed to prepare for the noonday march, in a much more harmonious temper than might have been expected from the cavalier treatment they had received. But the Great Traveller went by previous experience, and previous experience justified him in taking a popular assembly, as brave men take a bull, that is to say, by the horns.

CHAPTER LI.

LYING BUGLOSS'S FALSE ALARM.

AT the appointed hour all was ready throughout the camp, and Tuf-longbo's troops waited in the order of march to follow him. He had strapped on his knapsack, and taken his staff in his hand; even the word of command to start was on his lips, when suddenly there was a great commotion in the rear, and false Bugloss, the spy, out of breath, ragged and dishevelled, came floundering into the midst, and threw all into confusion by gasping out,—

"For your lives, for your lives! fly! fly!! fly!!!" and then falling into a fit, and becoming quite incapable of explaining himself any further.



For the space of five minutes the uproar was appalling. Betony, out of his wits with terror and surprise, Abecedary, Dandelion, and Fig were for taking Bugloss's advice, and running straight away; but Walnut quietly circumvented them, and, wagging his head at their nervous expostulations and entreaties to be allowed to escape, said jocularly,—

“There's no hurry, my little braves, there's no hurry; you are worth ten dead men yet.” Betony whined, and endeavoured to touch his feelings by dolorously opening his mouth, and crying until the tears ran into it like a river, but Walnut could not be moved; and Whin at last grew so enraged at the degrading spectacle, that he caught the poor feeble creature by the nape of his neck, and shook him until he did not know for a whole month after whether he was walking on his head or his heels.

When Betony was thus comfortably disposed of, Tuf-longbo contrived to make his voice heard above the din, which growled and fretted itself into a discontented submission; and, standing forth upon a lofty fungus that grew by the wayside, he said in a clear, contemptuous voice,—

“Let all those valorous folks, whose strength lies in their tongues, gather up their traps forthwith, and go back to their wives' apron-strings.”

This address elicited a startling shout of applause from Snap-dragon, but his triumph was of very brief duration; for Tuf-longbo turned upon him with a sharp retort, exclaiming,—

“And *you*, presumptuous fellow, may lead the chatter-boxes home.”

Snap-dragon's countenance, a moment before so jubilant, fell until it was as long as a fiddle, while everybody

who heard the rebuff tittered, for, of all the braggarts and empty wind-bags in Sheneland, he was the chief.

The panic occasioned by lying Bugloss's abrupt appearance, and loud outcry of terror, was now subsiding, and each one began to look round upon his neighbour to ask slightingly, "Who was afraid?" Nobody, of course; even Betony had wept himself into a stolidity that might have been mistaken for courage, and Dandelion, Abecedary, and Fig were pluming themselves up again with as many airs of resolution as they had worn before the false alarm of Bugloss suggested that their best safety lay in flight.

But Hawkweed had had his eye upon them throughout, and he was not to be deceived by any simulated courage; so he whispered to Tuflongbo that he should single out by name all whom he desired to accompany him, and place them forthwith in rank as they were to march. Tuflongbo took the hint, and, casting a shrewd glance round the assemblage, which was again showing signs of becoming tumultuous, though now in the different way of vaunting its doubtful valiance, he cried,—

"Hawkweed and chivalrous Daffodil, to the front!" and Hawkweed, and Daffodil, flaunting his yellow flag, sprang to their post without a word, but looking keen and bold as adventurers should.

"Yarrow and Arum, Borage and Box, follow two and two!" cried the Leader; and they fell into place instantly like well-trained soldiers, prompt and obedient.

"Now, the officers of the commissariat, strong Fennel and Juniper to help him!" said Tuflongbo. "Then Whin, Xanthium, and Valerian go in single file."

This arrangement was on account of their peppery tempers; they were useful on expeditions, because



honest, though rough and quarrelsome, alike with friends and foes. "Next Dock and Dodder, Elder and Hawthorne; then Walnut and adroit Orphry, to bring up the rear, and guard against ambuscades. Golden Rod and Bearded Crepis will precede me and my little friend Content. Lychnis and Sardony must come with us as our interpreters: and Phlox and Meze-reon, in case we need to send courteous embassies to smooth our way, before us."

"And where are *we* to go?" cried, as with one breath, Dandelion, Fig, and Abecedary.

"You are to go about your business," was Tuflongbo's calm reply. And while they were still standing bewildered at this peremptory dismissal, the word was given to "March!" Daffodil waved his yellow flag, each member of the selected band put his best leg foremost, and off they went, through the Enchanted Forest of Stone, tramp, tramp, tramp—every step in time; leaving Bugloss still in his fit upon the ground, Betony with his mouth open, and his face set to cry again, and the discharged mob of camp-followers falling to in a lively quarrel amongst themselves.

CHAPTER LII.

THE INVASION OF RUFNAGUMBA'S TERRITORY.

TUFLONGBO always as much as possible discouraged conversation on the march, and for three hours after the start not a voice was heard, except once that of Xanthium snapping at Whin. Immediately the order

was passed that they should quarrel in whispers, and the habit of obedience, prevailing over their naturally splenetic tempers, reduced even them to silence.

Little Content stepped out gallantly by the side of the kind-hearted Traveller, who had taken him under his protection; but though he was much interested in all the new and strange things he saw, he could not help his thoughts wandering often to his mother, to his lost home, and to his father, who would be returning about that time on his lonely, uncheered way through the forest.

Tuflongbo, perceiving that he was sorrowful, asked what ailed him, and Content replied that his heart yearned for a sight of his mother. The Traveller, whatever he thought, did not unwisely make him sadder than he was already, by any reminder of how ill she had used him, but drew a magic crystal from his breast, and putting it into the child's hand, said, very tenderly, "Look there!"

Content received it eagerly, and fixed his eyes upon the clear mirror for an instant, but the next he closed them with a shudder, and thrust it away from him with more haste than he had taken it. He did not tell what he had seen, neither did Tuflongbo inquire of him; but he knew that it was something dreary, for the big tears stood in his pretty eyes for ever so long after.

The gray amongst the stony ranks of trees was now growing towards the blackness of night, and Tuflongbo was just on the point of ordering his troops to bivouac at the point they had reached, when a deep, rumbling roar came rolling up a ravine that opened abruptly from the direct track which they had followed hitherto.

"Halt!" cried the Leader, and all the band halted as

one man, and held their breath to listen, while the echo of the terrible sound throbbed and died away in the distance like thunder amongst the hills.

When all was silent again, Tuflongbo took Content, and putting him under the care of bearded Crepis, placed them in the centre of the band for greater safety; then he chose Hawkweed and Arum for his special companions, and went down into the ravine, bidding Daffodil and the rest follow at a little distance with courage, but still with caution. And every heart in the little band kept time as true as did their steps in the tramp, tramp, tramp of their steady march.

Tuflongbo had only advanced about fifty paces with his two gallant supporters, Hawkweed and Arum, when the threatening roar was repeated; and this time it seemed to roll under their feet, as if the ground were caved full of hollow galleries, which made the sound even more awful than before; but the Adventurers were neither disheartened nor affrighted; and a third repetition of the hideous discordance only braced up their courage to the point when they would dare and do everything, or die gloriously before their invisible and mysterious adversary.

"Close in behind there!" cried Tuflongbo; and chivalrous Daffodil drew his followers together in a solid body, and pressed forward to the aid of their Leader, just as a crashing of dead branches and a heavy trampling, in the long reeds and grass that clothed the swampy hollow of the ravine, gave warning of the enemy's approach.

"I spy!" shouted Hawkweed: "we have invaded the territories of the mighty Rufnagumba."

And instantly, with a phosphorescent lustre shining



INVASION OF RUFNAGUMBA'S TERRITORY. 327

from his scale armour, and illuminating the air all around him with a ghastly glare, dashed out of the thickets the four-winged, green dragon, whose cruel exploits had made that district of the Enchanted Forest of Stone terrible for a hundred generations. Much of what he had done was recorded in the archives of Sheneland, and bore an almost fabulous character, by reason of the elucidations of that section of the Royal Society of Wiseacres, whose labours were directed to the interpretation of ancient history; and Tuflongbo could hardly contain a cry of exultation when he found himself confronting Rufnagumba to the nose, and thought how he should confound the cavilling Black-caps who went near to denying his existence altogether, when he came to recount before her Majesty and all Elfin Court his personal encounter with the dreadful tyrant in the strongholds of his own dominions.

But this natural sentiment was soon quelled and put out of sight by the imminent dangers and difficulties of the situation. Rufnagumba was not a pleasant fellow to meet on a dusky night, enlightened only by the fearful radiance that shone from his own scales; and when he stood face to face with Tuflongbo, and snapped his long shining teeth together, the sound was as the sound of a portcullis dashed down in the front of a foe. But Tuflongbo stood his ground, and while Hawkweed kept a sharp eye on the furious dragon, lest he should lash out his long tail and encircle the whole troop to their destruction, Arum, with the reckless ardour that distinguished him, sprang forward, and smote the cruel tyrant on his hideous mouth.

At that instant it seemed as if the earth opened and shut, so terribly was it shaken by Rufnagumba's roar of

rage and pain; but Tuflongbo's little band was metal to the backbone, and instead of being daunted by the uproar, they took prompt advantage of the dragon's confusion, and surrounding him with one rapid evolution, made him their prisoner.

The struggle had been very short; Rufnagumba gave one groan, wriggled his tail thrice in the extremity of his mortification, turned on his back, and fainted away upon the spot. At the same moment all the strange illumination emitted by his glittering scales went out, and Tuflongbo and his gallant band were left in utter darkness to guard their formidable foe.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE FOUR-WINGED DRAGON IS CAPTURED.

THE first question was, of course, how to obtain a light—the second how long Rufnagumba's swoon was likely to last—questions of immense importance both.

"Who has the matches?" asked Tuflongbo, in a whisper.

"I have," responded a gruff voice at his elbow, which made him start.

"What, old Bur, are you there again?" cried the Leader; "I thought we left you behind at noon with the folks whose strength lies in their tongues."

"Did you!" grumbled Bur; "I am not so easily shaken off as that, my sprightly friend! I hold my commission from Prince Goldheart, and little as I relish

some of your proceedings, 'duty before pleasure' is my motto. Shall I strike a light?"

"Since you are there, you might as well," replied Tuflongbo, ungraciously.

When crusty Bur had struck a light, and his eyes fell on the prostrate form of Rufnagumba, he groaned inwardly at the rashness which had tempted the Traveller and his followers to enter the ravine.

"When you heard his roar you should have fled as with seven-leagued wings!" said he, reproachfully. "If the event had happened otherwise, and you had all been eaten up, what account could I have carried back to my gracious master?"

"If we had been eaten, *you* would have come in as a titbit for dessert, old Prickles!" cried Lychnis, laughing in his face.

"Not so," replied Bur, sententiously. "If Rufnagumba had attempted to swallow *me*, I should have stuck in his throat and choked him."

"Then if he comes to inopportunely, and there is any risk for the rest of us, make ready to be a martyr; for as sure as you are alive now we will cram you into his teeth!" cried Xanthium, savagely.

At this threat Bur retired with precipitation, and sheltered himself under the protection of bearded Crepis, who was guarding little Content. Tuflongbo evidently felt much annoyed by the fretful counsellor's unexpected reappearance, but he would have been utterly enraged if he could have seen the sneaking train that he had permitted to follow him. Betony, and the rest of Tuflongbo's discarded troops, had been **even more** affrighted at their abandonment than at the **dangers** of the forward route; so they had tracked the



Leader all the way he and his noble band had marched since noon, and were now gathered in a quaking cluster at the mouth of the ravine, expecting that every moment would be their last. Fortunately the fiery Traveller had not leisure to spy them out at once; for a green light began to emanate from the twirled tip of Rufnagumba's tail, and gave warning that he was recovering from his deadly swoon, which set all the band on the alert.

It was impossible to predict what the dragon would do when he woke up to a sense of his shameful captivity; therefore Walnut, who was full of stratagems, and the adroit Orphry, had contrived to envelop him in a curiously entangled net, woven from the tendrils of a creeping plant, which were as tough as whipcord, and roughened with spines hard as iron, and which would pierce his scales to the quick if he attempted to break out of it. Tuflongbo and his brave followers could thus watch the green light creeping up his tail and sides with great composure; as it increased in brightness, the torch that old Bur had lit faded, and they knew that every moment was bringing him nearer to full consciousness. Gradually the phosphorescent lustre tinged his ears, his throat, his jaws; and at last, with a groan that shook him all through his mighty bulk, he heaved himself over, opened his eyes, whence flashed two lances of ruby fire, and attempted to rise upon his broad-webbed feet. Then, and not till then, did he discover how he was entrapped. He uttered a roar of desperate rage, and made a spring, as if he could thus escape and leave the net behind; but a strong link caught him, and with a horrid gasp he sank upon his side among the reeds. Arum and Yarrow were for at once dashing in upon

him and slaughtering him, that they might carry back to Elfn Court trophies of his glittering scales; but Tuflongbo authoritatively interposed, and said, that whatever fate might ultimately be decreed against him, his life must be held sacred until he had made a full confession of his crimes, and had revealed the mysteries of the subterranean cavern where he maintained his wicked rule.

The two impetuous assailants fell back at the order of their chief, and forbore to strike; and Tuflongbo then addressed the captive Rufnagumba as follows:—

“Rufnagumba, I arrest you in the name of her most gracious Majesty the Queen of Sheneland; and call upon you, as you would experience her sovereign clemency and mercy, to make instant confession of your enormous villanies, and to recite the list of those unhappy prisoners whose tears are still bedewing the floors of your secret dungeons.”

To this Rufnagumba, untouched by the flowers of eloquence that bloomed on the great Traveller's lips, responded only with a roar of rage; for which Xanthium, who was sadly deficient in that tact and courtesy which should have led him to pity a conquered enemy, dealt him a cuff on the side of the head, and admonished him to be more respectful in his manners.

“Xanthium, you are too zealous! Do that again and I order you to the rear,” said Tuflongbo, with severity; and Xanthium sulkily put his hands in his pockets and retired a few steps from the dragon, that he might be out of temptation if he provoked him any more.

Thrice again did the great Traveller summon Rufnagumba as before, and thrice again did Rufnagumba make the Enchanted Forest of Stone echo with his

barbarous reply. Tuflongbo, perceiving by this that he had made up his mind to determined contumacy, turned to the strong-limbed Fennel, and commanded him to bring a chain and pass it round the dragon's neck, and strong cords to bind his legs, as also two stout javelins to pinion his powerful wings. The business of securing Rufnagumba, who struggled mightily, was not accomplished without much hazard and even some wounds. The whole force had to assist. Box and Borage, Dock and Dodder, Lychnis and Sardony, Mezereon and Phlox, Walnut and Orphry, sprang upon his back and held him down by main force; while Valerian, Whin, and Xanthium enjoyed a malicious pleasure in hanging on to his flapping tail; it was Whin and Valerian who, forgetting caution in extreme delight, received some severe injuries from the sharp edges of his scales. Arum and Yarrow held him in awe with spears pointed at his breast, and Fennel, Daffodil, Hawkweed, Hawthorne, Juniper, Golden Rod, Bur, and even Tuflongbo himself, lent a hand to make fast his bonds. When the process of pinioning was over, Rufnagumba could only crawl upon his stomach in the slowest and most abject fashion, and this he was compelled to do without any other solace than such as could be derived from emitting at every jolt a vengeful roar of mingled suffering and despair.

“Drag the tyrant to the entrance of his cruel den!” said the Leader, with dignity; and a double file began to haul steadily at the chain round Rufnagumba's neck, while six of the most active spirits, armed with spears and lances, hovered behind to expedite his movements in the rear.

Thus imperiously urged, the ferocious but humiliated

captive was driven at last to the yawning mouth of a cavern as black as midnight; and there his resistance became again so frenzied that several of his guards were flung to the ground, and in one desperate plunge he succeeded in breaking a link of his net, and thrusting out a horrid foot, all webbed and clawed; but Arum, with a gallantry beyond all praise, was down upon him in the twinkling of an eye, and with his glittering lance he pinned the frightful member to the earth.

Tuflongbo spoke a few words of warm commendation to his brave young comrade, which incited him to a deed of yet bolder daring; for when Rufnagumba, as a forlorn hope, began to puff sulphurous fumes from his nostrils, in the impotent desire to suffocate his enemies, Arum took Bur's heavy cloak and flung it over the dragon's head, which caused the vapour to retire down his own throat; and the result was a convulsive fit of coughing, that left him so feeble as to be incapable of further resistance, and quite at the mercy of his conquerors.

Just at this moment, Betony and all the discarded folks, whose strength lay in their tongues, having crept by stealthy, trembling steps down into the ravine, became visible to Tuflongbo by the light of Rufnagumba's scales, and he stared at them for a minute or two, as if he could hardly believe his eyes. They began simultaneously to make their explanations and excuses, to which Tuflongbo wagged his head with deep significance, and though he spake never a word, they all understood that they were by and by to be promoted to an office for which they would have but little stomach.

The entrance of the dragon's den appeared from the exterior to be exceedingly precipitous, and not to risk



the lives of any of his more valuable followers, the Leader determined to plumb it first by means of one of the foolish, useless bodies, whose strength lay in their tongues, and poor Betony, being the most provoking and obtrusive in his tremors, was selected for the honourable but dangerous precedence. By Tuflongbo's orders, a cord was slung round his body and carefully secured between his shoulder-blades, and then Fennel and Orphry lowered him with great care and caution down into the terrible darkness, bidding him observe studiously all he saw, and bring back a correct account.

Betony was too dizzy with fright to observe anything, and as he felt himself dropping lower and lower into the gloom, he set up a most pitiful boo-hoo; but Fennel and Orphry still paid out more and more rope, until his dismal howl was swallowed up in the awful solitudes of the cavern. It seemed half a lifetime before he felt ground under his feet, but, at last, he touched the solid rock, and then he shut his eyes, sat down, and gave himself up for dead at once. Fennel and Orphry, finding the rope slacken, knew that their object was gained, and apprised Tuflongbo, who counted twenty-five, and then ordered him to be drawn up again to the surface. The condition of the unhappy Betony, when he re-appeared amongst his companions, was more deplorable than words can express. He was yellow as an orange, his teeth chattered with cold, and the tears trickled feebly down his poor nose. Fennel tried to prop him up while he made his report, but he would not be propped, and sank in a quaking heap upon the ground. Tuflongbo asked him what he had seen.

“Nothing—boo-hoo!” sobbed Betony.

“Here! put him out of the way—a piece of live lumber!” cried the Great Traveller, with impatient contempt; and, as Xanthium and Whin executed the command, Betony howled again, for he thought Tuf-longbo’s order to *put him out of the way* was a figure of speech signifying that he was to be summarily put to death. He was reassured, however, when they laid him at length under a tree, and with the moral remark that he was more frightened than hurt, left him to himself.

After the failure of Betony’s descent into the cavern there was a general consternation, until Tuf-longbo took Walnut aside to consult on their next step. Then Bug-loss, whose curiosity, while out of danger, was intense, thrust himself upon their notice, and volunteered to go down into the dragon’s den in the boldest manner. Tuf-longbo would have declined his services, but his reiterated promises to be exact in observation and truthful in report, prevailed over the Leader’s reluctance to trust him; and the cord being secured round his person, he was let down into the mysterious cavern in the same fashion as Betony had been before him.

And to all intents and purposes his behaviour was precisely the same as his predecessor’s. Long before his feet touched the bottom, he was overwhelmed with terror, and whatever there had been to see, his fixed and stony eyeballs could not have seen it. His hair stood on end, his face was clammy, and every morsel of flesh upon his bones quivered and quaked. When the rope slackened, Tuf-longbo, who was becoming impatient, counted twenty-five again, and then ordered him to be drawn up. This time, however, the strain on the rope was much greater than before, and it showed signs of fraying and breaking away, which made the position of

Bugloss perilous in the extreme. It was at this momentous crisis that Tuflongbo's philosophy came out strong.

"Should the rope break, and should Bugloss perish, he will have earned a death of glory, and he will not mislead us any more. There is good in everything, and consolation under all misfortunes." And when he had spoken, all the band waited and held their breath in anxious excitement.

Bugloss, swaying to and fro at the end of the rope, was struck midway the ascent with the cruel certainty that something was amiss, and he called out in a most vehement and passionate accent to those who were drawing him up to make haste. A few more agonising moments elapsed, and then the spy's head appeared on a level with the upper earth. Immediately twenty ready hands seized him by the hair, and he was dragged out, white and breathless, and laid upon the grass. Those around were so eager to apprise him of the risks he had run, and the dangers he had escaped, that his own signs of suffering passed unnoticed; and he had time to recover his native falsity and impudence before Tuflongbo inquired of him, as he had done of Betony, what he had seen in the dreadful cavern.

At this question his imaginative faculty suddenly sprang into full vigour, and he spread his hands abroad and raised his eyes as if what he had witnessed was too marvellous and glorious to be put into common words. This demonstration attracted the attention of everybody, and perceiving that he had possession of the ears of wise and foolish, brave and braggart alike, Bugloss gave wings to his florid fancy, and poured forth such a description of the riches and splendours hidden in Rufnagumba's

den, that all, without exception, were eager to go down at once and explore it in person.

"There is a table spread as for a feast of kings!" cried he, in a swelling voice. "There are roast peacocks, and currant jelly, and plates of gold. A fountain in the centre foams with creamy beer, and fruit of Aplepivi stands for second course."

"Don't talk in blank verse," interrupted Sardony; "but tell us, is there any cheese?"

"There's cheese of Stilton full of wine and life; and plums, and peaches, and a noble pig! There's calves' head hash, and pettitoes and puff; were we a thousand strong there's food enough!"

"Let us go down to supper," said Tuflongbo.

All the band, both workers and talkers, with one consent applauded this proposal; but Rufnagumba was affected with a choking sound in his throat which was very like a strangled laugh. This recalled attention to him, and a difficulty arose as to who should guard him while his brave conquerors were taking some refreshment. No one volunteered for the service, because everybody was hungry; and at length Tuflongbo said they must draw lots; so they drew, and the lot fell on Betony.

The terrible dragon was then chained up to a tree, and poor Betony was seated down on the ground within an ace of his snapping jaws, armed with a javelin which he held like a toasting-fork. It was a spectacle to touch the heart of a stone to see him nodding his head at the monster with sheer weakness and grief; and Yarrow warned him to take care and not nod it much nearer his teeth, lest he should suddenly wake up and find himself without one.

“It would only be kind to lend the poor fellow your brass cap,” suggested old Bur; but Yarrow declined to do anything of the sort, and in a few moments Betony was left alone with his dreadful charge.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT ABOUT SUPPER IN THE DRAGON'S DEN.

EVERYBODY was now very eager to get down into the cavern at once, to enjoy the sumptuous supper Bugloss had so poetically described; but they had to wait until Walnut constructed a ladder of ropes, and made it fast for precaution to the dragon's brazen ears. They then descended one after the other as swiftly as possible,—Tuflongbo, little Content, and bearded Crepis being the last.

As Tuflongbo went down the ladder it struck him that the lively spirits of his companions had become suddenly very flat, for not a single exclamation of surprise or delight was to be heard. And yet they were all at the bottom. Could the gorgeous scene transcend imagination so far as to have struck them dumb? He hoped so, but his heart misgave him sorely; and when he reached the ground all doubt was at an end. Bur had struck a light which dimly betrayed the scared visages of Dandelion and the rest of the poor bodies whose strength lay in their tongues, and a smothered yell from the lying Bugloss ominously announced that Xanthium, Whin, and Valerian, had laid hold of him

and were pounding him without mercy to compensate for the universal disappointment.

Tuflongbo required no explanation—the scene but too dismally explained itself. So far from there being any supper, the prospect was of the most inhospitably dreary character that could be conceived. The cavern was of immense extent, and the walls rose dimly into space, festooned with dank weeds, dripping water from every spray. Upon the black floor were strewn a few broken bones, but no other signs of festivity met the eyes of the adventurers. Well might Rufnagumba laugh!

“This *is* a sell, Tuflongbo!” said Borage, with his usual bluntness; “my stomach has been crying cupboard this long hour past!”

“It has been crying in chorus, my dear fellow,” replied the Leader. “I am half-famished too.”

“Bugloss is the only one who’ll not go with short-commons to-night,” observed Box, stoically.

“By all means, let *him* have enough,” was Tuflongbo’s sententious answer.

“Trust his present entertainers for that,” said Box, twirling his moustache with vindictive amiability; and it had an inexpressibly soothing effect on everybody’s appetite to listen to the false spy’s howls and roars of anguish as the blows fell on his miserable person swift and thick as hail.

But, even beating Bugloss could not for ever allay the cravings of hunger; and Tuflongbo, as a sagacious Leader, knew that hungry folks are apt to be discontented; he, therefore, was about to despatch Fennel and Orphry up the ladder to fetch some of the ample provisions they had brought for the journey, when, to

his great astonishment, he saw that the ladder had disappeared! Rufnagumba, with a ferociously sarcastic wink at Betony, had given his head a toss into the air, and the rope ladder having been secured to his brazen ears, he literally jerked it up out of the cavern, where Tuflongbo and his companions were thus caught as in a trap!

This was, indeed, a most desperate situation! Hawkweed discovered the loss of the ladder at the same moment as Tuflongbo, and they exchanged a glance of mutual dismay and confidence. It now became imperiously necessary to divert the thoughts of the band from their internal sensations, and nothing was more likely to effect this than the sudden shock of new dangers to be encountered and conquered. Tuflongbo therefore cried aloud to his companions to stand firm and steady, lest the brood of Rufnagumba, who, doubtless, lurked in the remote corners of the cavern, should scatter and devour them. To this Arum and his fellows responded boldly, defying all dragons, young and old; but Dandelion, Fig, and their friends gave utterance to a shrill expostulation, and besought Tuflongbo that he would send an embassy to treat for their deliverance.

"An excellent suggestion, and you shall be the ambassadors," replied the Leader, readily. "You may make the best terms you can, and if you are eaten up without salt, never mind. It will redound to your honour and glory, and I'll mention it in despatches."

But Dandelion said he had not been brought up in courts, and Fig declared that he knew little or nothing of State politics, and Abecedary begged to decline on account of his health; and all the rest of the chatter-boxes made their excuses; so the matter rested where

it was. But Tuflongbo's primary object was gained; for everybody had forgotten how hungry they were, and all felt either alert or affrighted at the prospect of fresh adventures.

The torch which Bur had lit served no other purpose than to make darkness visible; Tuflongbo therefore ordered a brighter illumination, and then, holding little Content by the hand, he led an exploring party round the cavern in the hope of discovering another way of egress, besides that at the top from which Rufnagumba had, with wily skill, withdrawn the ladder. For some time the search had no results; but at last, Hawkweed espied a narrow opening on a level with the floor; but it was as black as pitch within, and of no great depth, for Arum struck the opposite wall with his long lance to try it.

"No way out there," said Tuflongbo; and he was moving on, supported by his brave band, when a dismal sigh resounded from the vault.

"Here are the prisoners!" whispered Bur. "This must be the entrance of Rufnagumba's dungeons. Great Tuflongbo, there is a work of deliverance to be done now."

Tuflongbo issued his commands, and Arum sprang into the vault almost before the suggestion was out of Bur's mouth; close on the ardent young fairy's heels followed chivalrous Daffodil, Yarrow, and others, eager to share his difficulties and his glory. The only things that met their eyes at first were rusted links of chains and great iron rings secured to the walls, to some of which still hung tattered rags of clothing. They were rushing on to a dungeon beyond when the dismal sigh, which had led them to enter, was repeated; and Hawkweed espied



a deplorable little object crouched in a dark corner, from which the sounds of misery proceeded. The poor creature was at once tenderly raised, and carried out into the light, when Tuflongbo, through all the grime and soil of her haggard condition, recognised the sharp features of Aunt Spite. She seized his hand and kissed it, in the exuberance of her gratitude, calling him, "Dear Tuflongbo, sweet Tuflongbo, magnanimous Tuflongbo!" but though he pitied her abject state, he could not express satisfaction at her restoration to society; indeed, had he known who was in the vault, he would probably not have ordered it to be investigated. She told him that Rufnagumba had captured her about a month before, and that she only owed the mercy of her being still alive to the difficulty of making her fat enough to eat. The dragon had supplied her with abundant thistles, and other tender herbage, but, as she told him, nothing save mushrooms stewed in cream would ever cause her to grow plump. Tuflongbo heard her thus far with what patience he could; and, regretting that he had no mushrooms stewed in cream to give her, he told Xanthium and Whin to take her in charge, while he received the other prisoners whom Arum and his companions were extricating from their chains.

There was a little delay in producing the second prisoner, who, on being brought out and well shaken up, was ascertained to be the malevolent Lobelia in a most enfeebled state of mind and body; and when the matter came to be inquired into, it appeared that she had been taken at the same time and place as Aunt Spite, they having met together by appointment to arrange a philanthropic scheme for the regeneration of the court.

Arum and his companions had now reached the

innermost dungeon, and there, to their painful astonishment, they found the rich and proud Prince Polyanthus chained and double-chained to the wall and to the floor. In his passionate struggles, he had torn his splendid clothing to shreds; but he had only passed three days in the cavern, and though he had lost flesh and strength from lack of food, his haughty spirit was as rampant as ever. Arum hastened to loose his bonds with every expression of sympathetic courtesy; but, no sooner did Prince Polyanthus feel himself at liberty than he said, with a lofty air,—

“I will recompense you liberally.”

To which Yarrow replied in the same tone,—

“Prince Polyanthus, we are in the service of Queen Osmunda, and receive no pay but hers.”

“I am aware of that; but it is against my principles to owe an obligation even to the soldiers of my sovereign.”

“Buckle him up again, and leave him where he was, the ungracious churl!” suggested Sardony.

Prince Polyanthus started back, and nervously deprecated such a measure; but Arum reassured him.

“Be not alarmed,” said he; “it is a part of our every-day duty to aid the feeble and the oppressed. You are free, Prince Polyanthus, and may depart.”

And the proud prince hastened to avail himself of the permission.

“He appears to be the last,” said Daffodil, raising his torch so as to throw the light into the remotest recesses of the dungeon; but this proceeding betrayed to the explorers two other captives, who seemed to be sleeping.

Arum and Yarrow drew near to the spot where they lay, but so deep was the slumber of weariness and ex-

haustion by which they were overcome, that the sound of their footsteps did not awaken them. They looked like two fair young sisters; and though their countenances bore many traces of tears and distress, yet their beauty shone resplendent through them all. Even Yarrow was touched by their innocent loveliness, and suggested, in a whisper, that they should endeavour to remove them from the vault without breaking their refreshing sleep; and this Arum and Daffodil accomplished, Yarrow relieving them for the occasion of every other encumbrance.

When the two gentle, unconscious captives were presented before Tuflongbo by their gallant deliverers, he did not recognise them, neither did any of his companions; but Aunt Spite came forward and declared that they were Myrrh and Mimosa, princesses from the East, and daughters of the dignified Cloves, sovereign of the Balmy Isles; she said also that they had been betrothed from their earliest infancy to Prince Pomegranate and Prince Rhododendron, and that they had been sent to the Court of Sheneland to finish their education previous to their marriage.

At this information, Arum and Daffodil turned pale with anger and scorn.

“Prince Pomegranate!” cried the ardent Arum, indignantly; “his name is a byword for foolishness! Shall the beauty and spirit of the glad-hearted Myrrh become the possession of an idiot?”

“Prince Rhododendron!” shouted the chivalrous Daffodil, striking his hand fiercely into the air; “he is more wicked and dangerous than Rufnagumba himself! Shall the loveliness and grace of the sensitive Mimosa fall a sacrifice to a barbarian?”

The warmth and vehemence of these indiscreet exclamations awoke the two fair sisters, who, sighing, opened their eyes, and beheld, with surprise, the kind and respectful faces that surrounded them. Tuflongbo's chosen comrades were gentlemen, every one ; and when Myrrh asked, in a clear, sweet voice, "Where are we?" they all replied, "In honourable security." Then the sensitive Mimosa, glancing up, perceived that they were still in the Dragon's Den, and an expression of terror crossed her face, which touched the chivalrous Daffodil so profoundly that he broke out into eager, impetuous vows of devotion to her service. Tuflongbo sympathised in his beautiful sentiments, but he felt it his duty to check the utterance of them for the present, by reminding him that Princess Mimosa was the betrothed of Prince Rhododendron, and that the highest honour and courtesy forbade any attempt to supplant him in his absence.

"A fair fight and no favour, when you meet, if you like," said the Leader ; "but until I give up the princess and her sister into the custody of their dignified father, they are under my care, and I am responsible for them. Arum and Daffodil, fall back into your proper places, and keep them."

The two young soldier-fairies obeyed, but Daffodil twirled his yellow moustache, and Arum shook his purple locks with an air of great defiance—not of defiance at their commander—they understood duty and discipline too well for that—but of defiance at Prince Pomegranate and Prince Rhododendron, in whose characters and conduct they were determined henceforth to see nothing but what was either mean or mischievous.

It now became expedient to escape from Rufnagumba's

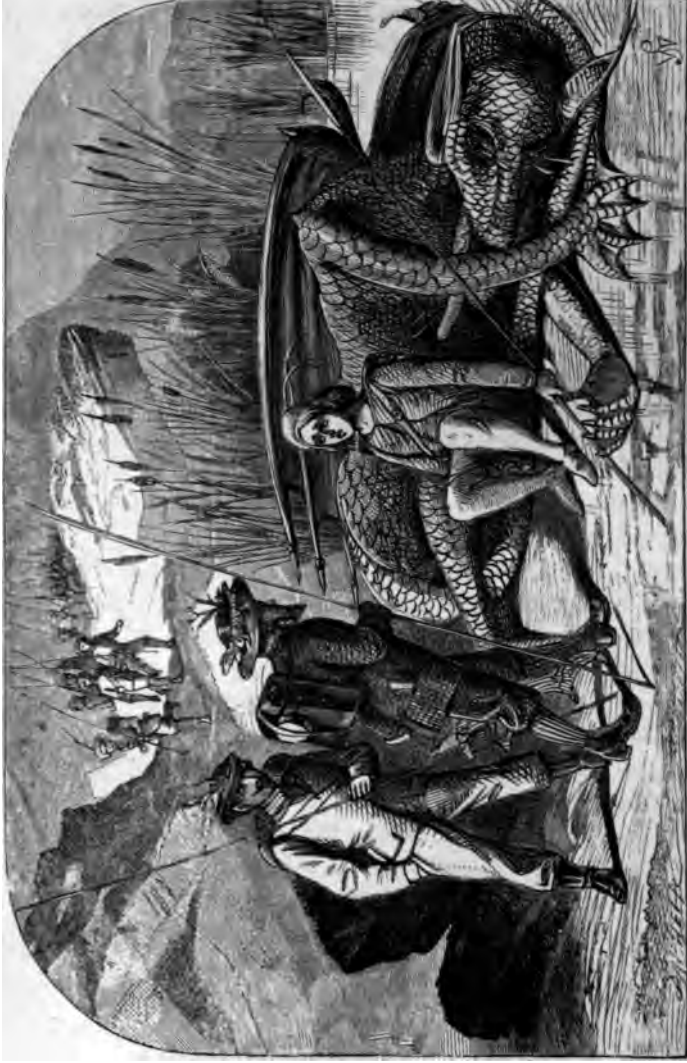
Cavern as speedily as possible; therefore Tuflongbo held a brief council with Walnut and Orphry as to the best means for accomplishing so desirable a result; and, after the matter had been discussed, a plan was hit upon, and successfully carried out in the way that is about to be narrated.

CHAPTER LV.

THE DEATH OF RUFNAGUMBA.

ALL the lances, spears, javelins, and pocket-knives of the company were collected, and then the adroit Orphry going first, drove them one by one into the precipitous face of the cavern, using each as a step up from which to fix the next. Walnut followed to hand him the tools, and the utmost steadiness of head and eye was requisite to maintain their balance, while performing the difficult and hazardous task. Tuflongbo watched them anxiously from below, clinging like flies against the wall, and could not sufficiently admire the boldness and expertness of their proceedings. At last their work was finished, and though it was not what one would choose as a pleasant method of mounting a lofty and dangerous cliff, it was nevertheless practicable to such as were sure-footed and brave. It was a zigzag staircase, of which each step was a weapon, blunt-edge uppermost, standing out horizontally from the face of the wall. Tuflongbo ascended to test its capabilities, before allowing any of his followers to risk their lives; but having tried, and pronounced it safe, everybody





Tutlongbo finds the Dragon Kuinagumba slain by Betony.



made haste to go up; Daffodil taking care of Princess Mimosa, and Arum of Princess Myrrh. The only people who made a difficulty about it were Prince Polyanthus, who thought that, considering his wealth and consequence, the impromptu staircase ought to have been covered with scarlet cloth; and Aunt Spite, who sat down and cried, declaring she could not get up at any price; but a message coming down to her from Tufongbo that she was heartily welcome to stay where she was, she made an effort, and holding on by her hands, contrived to scramble up as her malevolent friend Lobelia had done before her. Then Walnut and Orphry went down again to the bottom, and beginning with the lowest lance, drew all the steps out of the cliff, and passed them up to the top, where each person claimed his own, and found it none the worse for the novel use to which it had been put.

Tufongbo, having all his company once more around him, and safe out of the dragon's den, now looked about for Rufnagumba and Betony, whom he had left to guard him, but both had disappeared. Hawkweed, however, tracked them by the trampled grass and bushes down into a marshy hollow, where, to the overwhelming astonishment of even the rashest of the troop, Rufnagumba lay dead; Betony his destroyer, being seated on his tail, with the javelin that had done the mighty deed broken in his hand.

"How is this, Betony? I bade you watch our vanquished enemy, not slaughter him in cold blood," said Tufongbo, severely.

"It was a mistake, dear Tufongbo, an accident!" gasped Betony, quaking still. "He jerked up the rope ladder, and then winked and laughed at me so fero-



ciously, that my terror brought on an acute attack of spasms, in which this shocking instrument entered his right eye. In plunging at me for revenge, he drove it to his brain; then with a horrid yell he dragged me furiously through the reeds to this lonely spot, where exhausted nature failed, and, turning over on his back, he struck his webbed feet against the air, and died."

"Oh, Betony, thou bravest of the brave!" cried Sardony. "Thou wilt go down to posterity with glory as the most valiant of thy race, as the fearless fellow who first entered Rufnagumba's cave, and then took the dreadful monster's life!"

"Scale him, and let the folks whose strength lies in their tongues, share the burden of the spoils amongst them," said Tuflongbo; "I would rather have led him alive into the presence of our Queen Osmunda, so many of whose innocent subjects he has devoured; but since he is dead, regret is vain. Strip off his armour, and bury his bones, he was a worthy enemy!"

Then the Leader went up out of the defile into the open forest, and commanded the officers of the commissariat, Fennel and Juniper, to serve out double rations of food to the whole band; and to give fruit of aplepivi and golden honey for supper to the two fair princesses, whom Aunt Spite and Lobelia had volunteered to serve as waiting-maids. He then shared a crust of bread with little Content, and, after issuing orders that everything should again be ready to march at sunrise, he retired to write his despatches, and get forty winks of sleep himself. Thus within an hour from their miraculous escape out of the cavern, all the camp had bivouacked, and was at rest.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE MAGIC CRYSTAL.

LITTLE Content was the only person besides Tuflongbo who did not immediately seek to forget the fatigues and adventures of the day in slumber. He was too excited to sleep, and he therefore begged his kind protector to lend him the magic crystal that he might amuse himself with it until he began to feel drowsy. Tuflongbo granted his request, and laying the mirror in the palm of his hand, he thought of his father and mother, and of his lost home, and gazed into it sorrowfully. This time he did not withdraw his eyes as if the sight pained and shocked him; he continued to look until his lip quivered, and his pretty eyes glittered with tears.

Tuflongbo heard him sob, and glanced down from writing his despatches to see what ailed him.

“What do you see?” asked the Traveller kindly.

“My mother is sitting lonely in the house; Fairy Nettle is gone, and my father is away. I wish I were with her, Tuflongbo.”

“It is not time yet, my little man, it is not time yet.”

“She is very mournful, Tuflongbo; she leans against the closed window with her head on her hand, and the spinning-wheel is still.”

“She is hearkening to good counsel, let her listen awhile longer.”

“And now I see my father, he is in the midst of a noisy mob, shouting, singing, and drinking. Oh, Tuf-longbo, how his face is changed! I should be afraid to



run to meet him now, returning from his work through the forest."

Tuflongbo stroked the child's golden hair, and took the magic crystal from his hand.

"You have seen enough for to-night, my little man, now sleep," said he. Then he made him a pillow of scented thyme, and covered him with his cloak; and very soon Content had forgotten all his troubles in beautiful dreams where the sun shone, and the skies were blue, and the trees changeful green as they used to be before the forest became an Enchanted Forest of Stone. And when Tuflongbo had finished his despatches, and made honourable mention of all who had distinguished themselves in the adventures of the day, he too lay down and fell asleep beside his little gentle companion.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE PRINCESSES ARE LED ASTRAY.

THE first person who woke up the next morning was Aunt Spite, who went peeping and prying about to discover some opportunity for mischief; but Bugloss, whose aching bones had only allowed him very broken rest, was aroused by her stealthy footsteps, and fixed such an ugly eye upon her for attempting to possess herself of his office as spy, that she crept back to the spot where she had left the two fair Princesses sleeping, and from pure ill-nature shook them out of their pleasant dreams and told them it was time to get up. The sensitive Mimosa

looked timidly around, leaning on her more courageous sister, and discerning no movement in the camp, she ventured to say that she should prefer to rest a little longer; but the sun was just beginning to glimmer grayly through the thick trees, and the glad-hearted Myrrh greeted it with a song which mingled in with the dreams of the still-sleeping soldiers like a chorus of nightingales. Then Lobelia opened her eyes and sat up yawning; but at a significant glance from Aunt Spite she became instantly wide awake, and, though smiling, she felt as malevolent as possible.

"I know a secluded bathing-place," said she, insidiously addressing the unsuspecting sisters. "It is a running water that gives a pearly fairness to the darkest skin and a brilliant blush to the most pallid cheek. Will the sensitive Mimosa and the glad-hearted Myrrh go thither and lave their graceful limbs in the silvery flood? At break of day it is freshest and most potent in its charmed power."

The beauty of the Princesses needed no embellishment. Blue of violets was not bluer than their eyes, or the scarlet of hawthorn-berries redder than their lips; their hair was of the colour of golden flax when the sun is upon it, and their faces were of the tints of cream and roses. But the thought of a running silvery stream in the cool of the morning was pleasant and refreshing after their captivity in Rufnagumba's den, and their night bivouac under the trees, and without a fear or a doubt they followed Aunt Spite and Lobelia up and down through the bushes towards the secluded bathing-place, nobody but lying Bugloss seeing whither they went.

The Princesses twined their arms each affectionately



round the other, and the joyful Myrrh beguiled the way with many a carol, clear as the notes of a lark rising into the heavens at dawn. Aunt Spite and Lobelia trudged behind, conversing together stealthily, and never interrupting themselves except to answer when the sisters spoke.

First said the drooping Mimosa: "The running stream runs not here, Lobelia; we are mounting higher and higher at every step."

"Proceed, sweet Princess, you will behold it anon," replied the malevolent fairy.

Then said the glad-hearted Myrrh: "This wind blows over from Wildwaste,—I know it by the biting cold."

"There is frost in the air, but the sun will warm it by and by," answered Lobelia.

So the two Princesses went on; but presently Mimosa murmured, "I shiver, dear sister; fold me closer in your arms."

Then said Myrrh: "We will go no farther; these wicked fairies are misleading us;" and looking round to entreat their attendants to guide them back to the camp, to their deep dismay they found themselves abandoned and alone!

The place where Aunt Spite and Lobelia had left them was very desolate and exposed on the windy side of a steep hill; neither far nor near was there any sign of a silvery running stream; great rocks and moss-grown stones, long rooted in the earth, were around them, and the creaking branches of a stately foliaged tree extended over head. They clung to each other in the terror of their solitude, and even the glad heart of Princess Myrrh was oppressed and saddened, while the sensitive Mimosa



trembled through every nerve, and shook like a frail reed in the long and lamentable blast!

They attempted in vain to retrace their steps; Lobelia had led them so far astray, and by such circuitous and entangled paths, that neither could now remember them; and after much weary walking they sat down where three ways met, and waited, in the hope that good fortune would send some one by who would restore them to the protection of Tuflongbo and their gallant deliverers, the ardent Arum and the chivalrous Daffodil. But the morning passed, and the noonday, and the evening, and except the flight of a bird, or the cry of an insect, or the crisp flutter of a falling leaf, no sound came near them.

"Dear sister, the frost is entering my bones; I shall perish if we are not rescued soon," whispered the sensitive Mimosa, in a fainting tone.

"Courage, sweet heart, the night is not so very cold," replied Myrrh, fondly; and then, while the deep darkness descended on them, she sat and sang a thrilling sad song, which rippled down the wind to the dreary plains of Wildwaste, and brought all the giants to the foot of the hill to listen, wondering if it were the pretty Princess Trill come back again.

The noiseless flight of a bat through the gloom round and round the sisters' resting-place, at length arrested their attention, and, though Mimosa was much terrified, Myrrh summoned the ghostly winged creature to their aid. She then took a little leaf and wrote upon it how they had been led astray and were lost on the hills between the Enchanted Forest of Stone and the dreadful solitudes of Wildwaste; and tying it under the bat's wing she commanded him to fly through the night to Tuflongbo's camp, and to deliver it either to the bold

Leader himself or to his valiant companions, Arum and Daffodil.

And after circling in the air thrice the Black Bat flew straight down into the south.

CHAPTER LVIII.

DESPATCHES SENT TO QUEEN OSMUNDA.

WHEN Bugloss saw the two Princesses disappear in company with Aunt Spite and Lobelia, he longed to dog their footsteps, and to watch whither they went; but he was withheld from gratifying his spying propensities by the painful difficulty he had in moving, for every bone in his skin was sore with the beating that Xanthium, Whin, and Valerian had bestowed upon him the night before. He therefore lay in his place cross and discontented, until the matin-call sounded, and Tuf-longbo and all his people were up and astir.

He then sent a message to the Leader requesting an interview; but as Tuf-longbo was presiding over a council, he had to wait, and when his turn came to have an audience, the loss of the Princesses was discovered.

An outcry arose on the instant throughout the camp, and Prince Polyanthus said he had never known an instance of more culpable negligence. Then an inquiry was made for Lobelia and Aunt Spite, and when Tuf-longbo found that they also were missing, he muttered direful threats between his teeth, and bitterly regretted that he had rescued them from Rufnagumba's den, or suffered them to live.

Bugloss had now contrived to make it known that he had seen the Princesses and their attendants depart at sunrise, and he was put severely to the question as to what route they had followed. This opportunity for mystification was too favourable to be lost, and he promptly availed himself of it to give Tuflongbo much false information. Arum and Daffodil suspected his veracity from the first word he spoke, and warmly endeavoured to shake the truth out of him, but to no effect; and as he was the sole eye-witness to what had happened, they were at last obliged to accept his misguidance.

Meanwhile Fennel and Juniper had served out the morning's rations, and the whole band were hurriedly eating and burnishing their weapons in preparation for a forced march in pursuit of the two fair Princesses. Prince Polyanthus had been fretting and fuming ever since he awoke, at the little deference paid to his wealth and consequence by Tuflongbo's people, and in this moment of haste and confusion, he had the selfishness to claim the Leader's attention to his own paltry wrongs, which he stated at great length. Tuflongbo heard him with impatient courtesy, but while the Prince was speaking, he had time to develop a plan in his own mind, by which he might disembarrass himself of the folks whose strength lay in their tongues, and all his useless train of camp-followers, and yet send them away in high good humour both with themselves and him.

When Prince Polyanthus, therefore, had made an end of his complaints, he told him that he was going to forward that day despatches to her Majesty Queen Osmunda, and also to transmit to court the spoils of

the dragon's person; and that, as it was indispensable to place a person of judgment and experience in command of the party who carried them, he should be happy to appoint Prince Polyanthus to the dignity, if he would also accept the responsibility. To this the Prince, delighted at the importance of the post, bowed a lofty acquiescence, and Tuflongbo forthwith proceeded to select his company.

He gave the Prince presumptuous Snap-Dragon for his chief officer; Abecedary, Dandelion, and Fig, for his counsellors; Hawthorn and Elder, Dodder and Dock, were to carry Rufnagumba's spoils; and Phlox was sent in charge of the despatches. Betony also was invalided home at his own request; and to him, in consideration of his valiant exploits, was given a guard of honour equal to that which attended personally on Prince Polyanthus.

When all was in order, away they marched, some starting with the left leg, and some with the right; but Tuflongbo pretended to be blind to this want of discipline and organisation, so eager was he to make a good riddance of the Prince and his troop. Just before they were out of sight, Sardony bethought him of an omission, and cried, "Three cheers for the brave Betony!" and led them off himself, being supported by every voice in tumultuous chorus. Betony heard them, and feebly waved his hand, and some of his sympathisers remarked that he looked so ill, it would be much if ever he reached Elfin Court alive.

As the last of Prince Polyanthus's guards disappeared in the distance, Tuflongbo drew his own band together, in readiness for their more arduous expedition. "Now that we are few, and have a peculiar object to gain, our

manœuvres will be of a more daring character than hitherto," said the Leader, addressing his people in a spirited manner. Everybody but old Bur applauded; he only murmured a tirade against rashness and heedless rushing into danger for empty glory; but Tuf-longbo paid him no sort of attention, and went on with his speech. "Should we be obliged to separate in this dangerous pursuit, or to disperse singly, each must rely upon himself; and the first who comes on faithful traces of the lost Princesses, will be compensated by receiving from the gracious hand of Queen Osmunda herself the ennobling Order of Valour. Arum, Daffodil, and Yarrow, to the front! Quick march!" And they started at a swift trot in the direction the lying Bugloss had indicated, which happened to be the one diametrically opposite to that taken by Aunt Spite and Lobelia when they deluded the two hapless Princesses away.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE PURSUIT OF THE LOST PRINCESSES.

THROUGH the long morning and weary noon they tramped, not a failing heart amongst them; the stony ranks of trees stretched ever, long and level, before; and when the dusk of evening began to creep up and surround them, they were leagues and leagues away from their last night's bivouac, and had not yet heard a word or seen a sign either of the decoyed Princesses or their wicked guides. The ardent Arum and the chivalrous Daffodil were anxious still to proceed; but Tuf-longbo

desired to husband the strength of his troop, and refused to march in the darkness; he, however, gave them leave to go on alone, if they could not rest; and with a warm and hurried farewell to their companions in arms, the eager young soldiers departed.

A brilliant little firefly lighted the way for them, and presently it seemed as if it were leading them back again to the north; they did not, however, hesitate to follow it, for it was the surest guide in Sheneland, and was never known to have misled any one. And as they followed, they sang—

“ Fly, firefly, fly,
Through the midnight blue;
Fly, firefly, fly,
Guide us swift and true!”

And soon they were rewarded for their honest faith by meeting the Black Bat flying down into the south with the letter that Princess Myrrh had written tied under its wing. It came straight to them, and settled on Daffodil's shoulder; but they were too eager to take heed of the evil omen, and by the gleam of their tiny floating lamp, they read the tremulous lines upon the leaf, and embraced each other in the fervour of their joy. They then re-fastened the letter under the bat's wing, and ordered it to pursue its way until it arrived at Tufsongbo's camp, that he might know whither they were gone and follow them in the morning.

“ Speed, Black Bat, speed
From glad Myrrha's hand;
Speed, Black Bat, speed
To Tufsongbo's band!”

And with hearts full of new courage and lively hope, they steadfastly marched on towards the bleak moun-

tains of the north, that lay between Wildwaste and the Enchanted Forest of Stone. The sun was getting up as they passed the scene of Rufnagumba's death. The ravine was now quite still and deserted ; and the many-tendrilled creeping plant had covered his burial-place with a thorny tangle of leaves. Their camp of the night but one before, whence the Princesses had been beguiled, was also silent, and nothing seemed stirring in the solitary woods. But Arum and Daffodil were so cheerful, that they sang all the way as they went ; and the song they sang echoed through the hushed morning, and was heard by the glad-hearted Myrrh, and the sensitive Mimosa, who were still waiting and watching for deliverance on the cold northern mountains far away :—

“ Rise, morning, rise,
O'er the lonely hill ;
Rise, morning, rise,
We are marching still !

“ Glow, sunshine, glow,
Like the sun of love ;
Glow, sunshine, glow,
Warm each trembling dove !

“ Whisper, gentle wind,
We are on our way ;
Whisper softly, wind,
Like a lover's lay !

“ Come, Mimosa, come,
Daffodil is here ;
Come, gay Myrrha, come,
Arum, too, is near ! ”

The two gallant companions had left behind them the densest parts of the Forest, and were making their way through the low brushwood on its outskirts, when



their song was suddenly interrupted by the mysterious voice of Oleander sighing, "Beware! beware!" and before they had time to consider what danger threatened them, they perceived, coming up out of a steep defile to the left, an armed force, at the head of which marched the stately Cloves, King of the Balmy Isles, and Prince Rhododendron; while in a litter behind was carried Prince Pomegranate.

Arum and Daffodil understood, at once, that they had encountered a rival party in search of the lost Princesses under the command of their father and of their betrothed lovers. The dignified Cloves commanded the young warriors to approach in a haughty tone; but when he heard from them how his daughters had been rescued from Rufnagumba's den, and how the monster had been slain, he lovingly embraced them, and declared that had not the glad-hearted Myrrh been long promised to Prince Pomegranate, she should have been the prize of the brave Betony! Their father was much distressed that after so signal a deliverance the Princesses should have gone astray again, but the clue to their retreat, which Arum and Daffodil communicated to him, was so plain and simple that he began to entertain great hopes of discovering and carrying them home in safety before the day was over.

Arum and Daffodil at the King's request now marched with him, leading the way, and again and again did Oleander whisper to them to beware. Her warning, however, was little heeded until the chivalrous Daffodil felt himself slightly wounded in the neck; when he saw that Prince Rhododendron was regarding him with an evil eye, and that Prince Pomegranate was peering out at Arum from the drawn curtains of his litter, which he

kept closed lest the sharp winds should bronze his complexion, in a most jealous and invidious manner. Oleander had good cause to bid them beware, and they now lent an attentive ear to her cautions and kept a mutual watch upon their dangerous and foolish rivals.

From the conversation which was kept up as the force proceeded on their way, Arum and Daffodil learnt that the two Princesses had left home to escape the assiduities of the lovers, to whom, without their own consent, and while they were still infants, they had unhappily been betrothed. But the stately Cloves would not break his promise, which was sacred, having been given on the word of a king; and Prince Rhododendron and Prince Pomegranate having recently become clamorous for its fulfilment, the glad-hearted Myrrh and the sensitive Mimosa had fled away secretly from their father's roof, and had fallen the same night into the clutches of Rufnagumba.

The two Princes were vindictively bent on recovering possession of the fair fugitives, whose arrival at the Court of Sheneland had created a sensation of delight and admiration equal to that of the sweet Princess Trill, who afterwards married Prince Glee, the Queen's Cousin. For a little while Prince Rhododendron and Prince Pomegranate, who were then and always unpopular, had been the objects of great envy and of much depreciatory remark; and the flight of the Princesses, while it gave rise to much sympathy and sorrow for them, only strengthened the ill-feeling against their persistent suitors. King Cloves, however, supported their claims, and as he was one of the chief sovereigns who paid tribute to Queen Osmunda, she was, in a manner, com-

pelled to countenance his authority, though she was known to have expostulated with him privately on the cruelty of forcing his lovely daughters to marry persons so repugnant to them as were Prince Rhododendron and Prince Pomegranate.

Marching in company with the troop of King Cloves, the ardent Arum and the chivalrous Daffodil were much less cheerful than when under the orders of their favourite leader, Tuflongbo; and it was not until they began to mount the highest steppes of the barren northern hills that their flagging spirits rose again to the level of the occasion. It had formed no part of their valiant design to redeliver the sensitive Mimosa and the glad-hearted Myrrh into the hands of lovers whom they abhorred, and, but that they were incapable of either speaking or acting falsely, they would have misled them into the wildest part of the Enchanted Forest of Stone rather than have done so. But honour now left them no choice. The father of the lost Princesses was there, and it was their duty, as liege servants of Queen Os-munda, to aid him to the utmost of their power. They did their duty, therefore, bravely; and just before noon-day they brought the King, the Princes, and all their followers to the spot whence the Black Bat had started to fly down into the south; and there lay the two fair Princesses, pale and wearied, and enfolded in each other's arms, expecting to perish; for when the far-away song of Arum and Daffodil had ceased to sound in their ears, all hope of deliverance had died within them. Their sweet eyes were closed, and, for a few moments, it seemed to all who beheld them that they had ceased to breathe; but at the sound of their father's voice, they looked up with mingled joy and affright, and when

he opened his arms to receive them, they rushed into them and wept upon his breast.

Every one was extremely moved by this pathetic scene, except Rhododendron and Pomegranate, who thought that punishment and not caresses ought to have been the portion of the runaways; and when their tender father suggested that Pomegranate should give up the litter to the gentle damsels, that they might be carried from the dreary place of their sufferings, he abruptly refused, saying that he had had it made for his own convenience, and that the Princesses might very well trudge afoot. Rhododendron concurred in these surly sentiments, and only the severest self-restraint enabled the ardent Arum and the chivalrous Daffodil to bear their savagery in silence. King Cloves was too proud and dignified to reason with his churlish sons-in-law expectant, and when Arum and Daffodil offered to support the fragile and wearied Princesses down the mountains, their father acquiesced, and confided his lovely daughters to their gallant attentions.

The glad-hearted Myrrh and the sensitive Mimosa appeared perfectly happy and contented, as, leaning on the firm arms of their young deliverers, they leisurely descended the steep hill-paths. But Oleander whispered her "Beware! beware!" unceasingly, and the Honey-Flower sighed over them as they passed, "Speak low, if you speak love!" So they spoke very low, and Prince Rhododendron and Prince Pomegranate, though they strained their ears until they almost cracked, heard not a single word.

Prince Rhododendron then called his treasonous servant, Wortleberry, and they conferred together in whispers; but all the time they were hatching mischief, the

sensitive Mimosa was uneasily aware of it, and she kept a watchful guard over the chivalrous Daffodil's safety. Twice did she, by her loving care, preserve his dear and precious life; once when Wortleberry cast a noose over his head and attempted to strangle him, she dexterously cut the cord; and again, when Rhododendron drew near with creeping stealth, and tried to stab him in the breast, she struck up his murderous hand, and the dagger flew from it and fell amongst the bushes by the wayside. Such cowardly malignity served only to increase the fair Mimosa's detestation for her betrothed, and to deepen her affection for the chivalrous Daffodil, who sustained her drooping form with the fondest love, and vowed the devotion of the life she had saved to her sweet service for ever and a day.

The ardent Arum and the glad-hearted Myrrh suffered dangers and persecutions too, though in a different way. The weak-minded Pomegranate had not courage to kill, but he could lay traps; and having ordered his litter to be carried forward in advance, he strewed Dragon's Wort, for snares, upon their path; but Myrrh knew his foolish devices, and by looking carefully where they stepped, they were never caught once. Wortleberry tripped and pricked himself with his own poisoned knife, but there was no other accident.

And so they all reached the bottom of the hill in safety, and there they fell in again with the gallant Tufsongbo and his brave troop, who, with the Black Bat for guide, were coming swiftly to the support of their comrades, Arum and Daffodil, who had hastened on before for the deliverance of the lost and found Princesses. But there were no tidings of Aunt Spite or of the malicious Lobelia.

CHAPTER LX.

THE GIANTS' ATTACK.

A LONG, flowery, and courteous exchange of compliments took place between the dignified Cloves and the famous Tuflongbo on the instant of their meeting, and after mutual explanations, they sat down and supped together, in company with the Princesses, their betrothed lovers, and their valiant deliverers, Arum and Daffodil. Rhododendron and Pomegranate at first declined to eat with two soldiers of simple birth, such as were Tuf-longbo's followers: but the great Traveller reminded them that no dignity to which a fairy is born is so great as that with which he clothes himself; and King Cloves reproved them, saying, that if the guests *he* honoured were not of rank to sup with *them*, they were at liberty to retire to the side-table, where sat Wortleberry, Bugloss, and that noble fraternity, and to eat in their society instead.

The two Princes, thus rebuked, subsided into sullen airs, and but for the lively stories of Tuflongbo, the meal would have passed drearily enough; for the Princesses, and Arum, and Daffodil, were looking sorrowfully forward to their approaching separation, and the King was full of anxiety for the happiness of his children with such lovers as Rhododendron and Pomegranate had proved themselves to be.

Supper was nearly over, and the young soldiers had exchanged many sighs and sad glances with the sensitive Mimosa and the joyful Myrrh, in the anticipation

of what was to follow its conclusion, when there arose a panic amongst King Cloves' forces, which communicated itself more or less to the whole camp. Tuflongbo sprang up and buckled on his sword, shouting,—

“For Queen Osmunda and Tuflongbo!” which instantly restored his followers to themselves, though a cry of “The Giants! the Giants!” was leaping like wild-fire from tongue to tongue.

Arum and Daffodil, quick as thought in their movements, took the sweet, trembling Princesses and little Content, and placed them with Bearded Crepis for their protection, under the cover of a broak old oak. The sensitive Mimosa for a moment held back the chivalrous Daffodil; but when he looked in her fair face and said, smiling, “I could not love thee, sweet, so much, loved I not honour more!” she suffered him to depart, first tying her colours on his arm, and with the tears in her eyes, she bade him do his duty, and return to her for his reward. Arum and the glad-hearted Myrrh parted more cheerfully and hopefully; but the Black Bat was seen to settle on Daffodil's shoulder as he went into the battle.

Prince Pomegranate, at the first note of alarm, fled to his litter, and caused himself to be carried to the rear, and left with the waggons of the commissariat—a cowardly hiding-place, which did not, however, save him from a tragical and ignominious fate afterwards. But Prince Rhododendron, who, whatever he lacked, did not want for either personal courage or brute force, went into the fight with the foremost, and struggled hand to hand with several of the fiercest and most desperate of the assailants.

Tuflongbo led the main body of his troops himself;





Defeat of the Giants and Death of Daffodil.

Yarrow being in command of the left wing, and King Cloves of the right. At the head of the army of the Giants was Slouchback, who came lumbering and thundering over the ground at a gallop, supported by Lumba, Slink, and their brethren, in the hope of crushing and annihilating the gallant little troops of Shencland at a single charge.

But they counted without Tuflongbo. As they came within arrow-mark, he and his valiant followers let fly a thick shower of barbed arrows, which stuck in their breasts and faces, and caused them to fall back in disorder, breaking their ranks, and wounding and trampling on each other grievously. Before they had time to rally Yarrow's forces fired in upon them again, and though King Cloves was less ready, his people did much execution amongst those who fled.

For some moments there was dreadful confusion amongst the Giants, but Slouchback at length succeeded in reforming his scattered mob, and brought them up again ; and in this second assault the chivalrous Daffodil, who was waving his yellow flag above his head, and shouting to his followers to stand firm, received his mortal wound. Tuflongbo saw him fall, and Arum, springing to his side, stood over his brother-in-arms, and defended him with a passionate valour that was the admiration of friends and foes alike, until the Giants were fatally repulsed, and obliged to retire, leaving many of their number dead or dying on the field of battle.

Then the trumpets rang out a blast of triumph, and his brave comrades raised the mortally wounded Daffodil, and bore him to the rear, where Mimosa awaited his return. And she knelt down beside him to stanch the blood of his wound ; but when he smiled in her tearful

eyes, and told her it was vain, she raised his pale head upon her sensitive bosom, and his life ebbed away painlessly in her loving arms. Then she bowed down her face upon his breast, and her tender heart broke, and she died also. And after watching by them through the night, Tuflongbo and King Cloves commanded them to be buried together in one grave, with the yellow flag, which had led to victory and glory so often, to cover them ; and the Black Bat was left to watch over the spot until it grew green.

But the Princess Myrrh ceased to be glad-hearted because of her sister for many a day ; and the dignity of their father gave place to the cruellest regret. Prince Rhododendron also, who had loved the sensitive Mimosa after his fashion, dedicated himself to the most dangerous enterprises from that time forth, and died valorously many years after, leading a forlorn hope against the Serpentes of Marshollos.

Prince Pomegranate's fate remains covered with mystery to this hour. When the battle was over his people sought for him amongst the waggons of the commissariat ; but the litter was found to be empty, and Bugloss averred that he had seen a hungry Giant go and peep in, and supposing that Pomegranate, from his situation among the food, and from the dainty bloom of of his well-preserved complexion, must be something good to eat, he opened his huge mouth, and crunched him up at a single bite. The matter was never either authenticated or satisfactorily cleared up ; but certain it is that he no more troubled the Princess Myrrh with his attentions, and that when she returned to the Balmy Isles with her father after the loss of her beloved sister, it was as the betrothed of the ardent Arum, who was

to be permitted to claim her when he returned to Shenc-land from the expedition which he had undertaken with Tuflongbo through the Enchanted Forest of Stone.

CHAPTER LXI.

INTO THE COUNTRY UNDER THE SUN.

THE gay flag of the chivalrous Daffodil flaunted no more in the van of Tuflongbo's band when they marched away from the battle-field of the Giants, and the mournful resting-place of the sensitive Mimosa and her beloved. All were sad, but Arum especially was downcast, for he and Daffodil had been as brothers—foremost in every attack, and bravest where all were brave. He had also just said farewell to his betrothed, the Princess Myrrh, who had wept bitterly at their parting, when they exchanged rings and vows of mutual fidelity and tenderness. She was to return to the peace and safety of her father's court; but he was to continue his adventurous journey through the Enchanted Forest of Stone, and it *might* be to leave his bones in some desolate spot, like Daffodil and Mimosa. •

Yarrow tried to beguile the heavy way with histories of gallant deeds of arms from the chronicles of war, but Arum's thoughts often wandered to the wild desert place where the Black Bat was watching, and to the face of his dear Princess Myrrh. She, meanwhile, after traversing the hills with her father and his troops, was being safely wafted to the Balmy Isles.

Little Content had been deeply distressed and touched



by the death of the chivalrous Daffodil, and of the sensitive Mimosa, and he now trudged along in thoughtful silence holding the Leader's hand. Tuflongbo himself was sad; for he had lost one of the best and boldest of his followers, and all his brave young soldiers were as sons to his heart. Nevertheless he did not allow grief to overwhelm him; and when little Content whispered,—

“Why is it, master, that the worthiest die, as Daffodil died, in the moment of victory, and Mimosa when she had given her heart to love?” he replied,—

“They died well, my little man; the one valiant, the other pure.”

The child did not appear fully satisfied with this answer: “They might also have lived well, Tuflongbo, and very happily,” said he.

“I know not, my little man. Has there never been a moment since you were born when it would have been better to die than to live and suffer?”

“Yes, truly, when my mother drove me away from her home and her love, and the beautiful forest became an Enchanted Forest of Stone.”

“And yet, perhaps, it would *not* have been better. There is a future for you, and the hope of restoration.”

“It seems far off, Tuflongbo.”

“It will come nearer and nearer; and if it should evade you until you reach the borders of Sheneland, in the mysterious Shadowland you will find it again. The phantoms of the Good and True that mock us here, there become bodily presences; all our sufferings for right are angels that help us to embrace them.”

“Daffodil and Mimosa have reached that dim Shadowland, master?”

“They have reached it, my little man; and to them

it is no more dim—no more a Shadowland—but the land of light all stretch their arms towards when there is darkness here. We who stay behind mourn—those who pass before rejoice.”

“Nevertheless, I would that Daffodil’s flag were flying on the wind again! Death is a great mystery, Tuf-longbo.”

“Life is yet a greater, my little man. When we sleep to-night you shall go with me in your dreams on a journey to the Country under the Sun, and I will show you some of its puzzles on which brains work and hearts break every day.”

So that night when little Content fell into a deep sleep beside his protector, Tufongbo drew his gentle spirit through his lips, and the two floated out on the dark wings of the air, and down below the sun. And these visions were what they saw in the strange country where they rested from their flight :—

They entered first the door of a very humble cottage, and through the twilight gloom that pervaded it, Content failed for several moments to discover what was there. But as his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he saw a low bed, covered over with a fair white sheet ; and around it stood, silent and tearful, some little children with golden hair, and two elder persons, a man and a woman ; all of whose eyes rested upon the fair, white sheet beneath which was the veiled shape of a tiny motionless figure. The children with golden hair laid flowers upon it, and glanced up softly in the woman’s face, who sighed, and stroked their heads, and held them fondly against her heart, and kissed them.

Content thought of his mother, and his throat swelled

with pain, but he kept the sob down and watched. Then the man lighted a lamp that stood at the head of the bed, and in the pale halo it made, Content saw the face of Mannikin Hope, rather subdued and saddened, but still brighter than any other there; and the little children looked up at the lamp, and, seeing him, smiled.

Tuflongbo then beckoned his companion to come away, but at the door he permitted him to glance back, and the last sight he saw was the father taking his tools, and the children their toys; and the mother was putting her hand to her work again, though her eyes still rested sadly on the little motionless figure under the fair, white sheet.

"What is it?" whispered Content, below his breath; and Tuflongbo told him it was a little light quenched on earth to be rekindled in heaven. Then Content said, "That is no great mystery, they will watch where it shines and follow it."

They next floated into an upper chamber, very poorly and meanly furnished, where a maiden was sitting at work far into the night. One dull candle was on the table, and the silvery moonlight of heaven came through the broken window, and covered the wall with grotesque shadows, like the shadows of death. It was winterly cold, and there was neither food nor fire to be seen; but as the toiler drew her swift needle in and out, she crooned a song, the words of which little Content heard and remembered long. They were to a slow tune, like a chant, and ran thus:—

"Fainting here, failing here,
Weeping here, waiting here,

Toiling night and morn !
Hungry here, lonely here,
Wretched here, hated here,
Yet not *quite* forlorn !

“ If work is *here*, rest is *there*,
If pain is here, peace is there,
And *Hope* is everywhere !
If grief is *here*, joy is *there*,
If gloom is here, light is there,
And *Love* is everywhere !

If tears are *here*, smiles are *there*,
If sighs are here, calm is there,
And *God* is everywhere !
If sin is *here*, Christ is *there*,
If death is here, life is there,
And *God* is everywhere !”

As he listened, the poverty-stricken room seemed to Content no longer empty ; every angel of the song was present ; and in the worn, unbeautiful face of the singer there was a loveliness beyond the lustre of youth. That night her hard task was done, and just as the dawn began to struggle with the moonlight, she laid her head down smiling, and crossed her hands above her heart ; and so was wafted away from the slavery and suffering, to enjoy the unseen things which had been dimly shown her upon earth.

“ Neither is this a great mystery, Tuflongbo,” said little Content ; “ she had a sight beyond ours, and always in the darkness, she saw the sunshine behind the clouds.”

Then they descended on a great tumultuous city where eager crowds were hurrying to and fro ; but in whichever direction they turned, they were looking, one and all, towards an indistinct Phantom, hovering

over the roofs, which changed its uncertain shape every moment. Their eyes were full of homage and devotion as they raised them towards it; their lips moved in fervent vows, and their hearts panted with wild longing. Content imagined that these were fanatics, paying honour to their god; and he watched their worship as something singularly strange and new.

And as the form of the Phantom changed, so did its countenance. At one instant it was ample and smiling; the next it was full of a brazen mockery. Beneath it were various shapes that wore the expression of greedy Guile, of arid Avarice, of selfish Luxury, of desperate Want, of prudent Thrift, of wanton Waste, and of gentle Charity. The Phantom fed them all, more or less abundantly; and in some hands its least gift multiplied and became rich, while in others, its largest trickled away like water, or became dead leaves, or masses of a worse corruption. Its bounty was all good, but it turned to good or evil according to the disposition of those who received it.

Then, ever and anon, as the devotees were still holding forth their palms to this Phantom-giver, and either laying up store for themselves or distributing to those who had greater need, there came by another Phantom, draped and hooded in black, who whispered to them a secret word, on which they turned away, and others took their places. As with arid Avarice so was it with gentle Charity, as with selfish Luxury so with desperate Want—when the mysterious Shadow spoke they ceased their worship and followed him, first casting out of their hands every sign of difference, and going after him, prince and beggar, libertine and saint, in the same stripped and empty state. What the first Phantom gave

could not be carried beyond the limits of the city, where each remained but a little while.

Then they saw a man building up a beautiful pinnacle that pierced the air like a spire of fretted silver. With infinite care and patience he laid the foundations on the earth, and then he carved and piled each stone according to his grand design; working in, here and there, however, to the surprise and pity of all beholders, a bit of rotten wood, a flint, or even a layer of sliding sand, with every appearance of believing them to be as sound and substantial as the other materials of his fabric. And when he had done this, he always discovered the flaw, and mourned over it; but he could not undo it; so he toiled on, encouraging himself when he was weary with the thought that he would raise his pinnacle to such a stately height that all the dwellers in the city should behold it, and applaud, and wonder. But when he had raised it to the level of the other noble buildings that embellished the place, he began to flag in his exertions, and to find his work a mere vain-glorious thing; and the hooded Phantom came by, and touched him on the shoulder, and, without a word, the ambitious man forsook his unfinished labour, and went his way.

Next they passed over a glowing harvest-field where were busy reapers, young and old, gathering in the rich, ripe, yellow grain; and one amongst them was bent with years and labour until he could not hold himself erect. His poor hair was white as silver, his hands were brown and hard as horn. Through a long life he had diligently tilled the earth, and barely had it given him enough to eat. But Content loved his anxious face, where were

set the deep lines of many wants and many sorrows, and he was thankful when his hard day's work was done, and the hooded Phantom met him in the furrows of the field, and bade him rest.

Then they entered an assemblage of elders and wise men, professors of piety, of charity, and of all holiness whose duty it was to teach the people. But they could not agree as to the exact form of the lesson; so some fell to jangling, and debating, and abusing each other, but the larger number went out, and did their work worthily, having one great love in their souls, one great goal for their endeavours, and one great Master to reward them. And these diligent servants had much help from invisible angels; where they faltered, Faith upheld them; where they fainted, Hope restored them; and for what was mistaken in their manner of teaching, Mercy and Charity Eternal pardoned them. And when the dark-hooded Phantom called to them to come away and leave the work to others, a light shone about them, and it was said in the city that what they had done was well done, and their names were kept in remembrance.

Then they floated over a roaring battle-scene, where mighty hosts of men were struggling and falling round a red flag, on which were emblazoned, in letters of flame, certain cabalistic words which represented some of the strongest passions of mortals. For them, men left home and kindred, spent youth and health; for them, thousands were willing to die, and did die, and were forgotten, all but one or two.

Then they descended on a dark walled house, where

the sun never shone, and beheld brutal faces deep lined with vice and crime; and haggard faces marked with want and sin—and Patience was there.

And on an abode where every foot moved noiseless, and wakeful eyes through the long night kept watch with Mercy by the couch of Suffering and Pain.

And on an asylum for the desolate and oppressed, and helpful Charity was there.

And on a dense crowd of ignorant Youth, and Hope was there toiling with Industry

“It is enough,” said little Content; “let us back to Sheneland, Tuflongbo.”

“What lesson have you learnt, my little man, from what you have seen?” asked the great Traveller.

“I have learnt that man is always better and worse than his intentions; that there are angels abroad; and that God is over all.”

“Have you learnt no more than that, my little man?”

“It is enough; let us back to Sheneland, Tuf-longbo.”

And so they floated up on the dark wings of the air, and left the Country under the Sun far, far below.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE VALLEY OF SPECTRAL TEMPTATIONS.

THE following morning, as soon as the sun was up, Tuf-longbo and his gallant band marched forward on their adventurous journey again. They had now left behind

the deep glades and thick underwood of the forest, and were traversing a district where many of the most ancient trees had been cut down ; but gray wraiths of them still haunted the places where they had stood, and their hosts of dead leaves and branches formed vaporous clouds against the dull sky. When they entered upon this ghastly scene, where the spectral trees stood in ranks through which the whole band could pass in single file, and experienced no resistance, a great silence fell upon them all ; every one held his breath, and kept a watchful eye upon the threatening shapes which swayed noiselessly in the air, and pointed at them with wicked mocking gestures. Little Content looked up at them in great fear and awe, and clung close to Tuflongbo and Bearded Crepis for protection, but the colder his heart grew with terror, the uglier and more menacing became their appearance.

“You tremble, my little man,” said the Leader ; “yet there is no danger from without : these are only shadows.”

“Where, then, is the danger, Tuflongbo ? I feel it—I suffer it ; my blood runs cold,” replied Content, shivering.

“It is from within, my little man. Look firmly at these monstrous spectres, and they will fade into mist, and become invisible.”

The child obeyed, and to his great relief and comfort, the forms of the ghostly trees became more and more indistinct, and at last resolved themselves into the uniform paleness of the sky. But it was not thus with all Tuflongbo's followers. Arum and Yarrow paid them no heed, neither did Bur, Box, nor Borage ; but lying Bugloss was terribly daunted, and most of the others, though

they skilfully dissimulated their weakness and fears, yet felt an inexpressible horror and dismay. All the while the Leader encouraged them to be watchful and courageous.

"It is wiser to dread than to dare in this place," said he; "hold to your weapons, keep your thoughts pure, and march steadily together."

So they marched steadily together, until they overtook a little company of unarmed pilgrims going the same way as themselves through this haunted valley of temptation. The strangers were all weary and footsore, and Tufongbo, notwithstanding his natural benevolence, hastened to pass them by, unheeded and unassisted; but a few of his followers lingered to exchange civilities, and amongst them were the witty Lychnis, the ironical Sardony, and the courteous Mezercon.

The pilgrims were three in number; the aged witch Nightshade, her daughter Belladonna, and their attendant Hollyherb the Enchanter. Lychnis soon fell into conversation with Belladonna, who was dark but beautiful, with large glowing eyes that made him burn and shiver at the same moment. He regarded her with an intense and willing admiration for a little while, but when he would have looked away to escape the fascination of her gaze, he found he was bewitched, and that he had no longer the power in himself to do what he would.

Sardony mocked at him for a fool, and laughed at the splendid sorceress to her face; but she soon had her revenge, for fixing her furnace eyes luridly upon him, she paralysed his will also, and dragged him through many bitter humiliations before she flung him away. He was, indeed, more utterly and shamefully subdued

by her than any of his careless companions ; and all his life long he betrayed it by his vindictiveness against even the most innocent and guileless of her sex.

Meanwhile Tuflongbo and such of his followers as remained with him marched on, none looking back, though a whisper ran from lip to lip, and reached the Leader's ear, how some of his people had fallen into desperate temptation. The spectral shapes now began to change, and to lose the grotesque horror of their first aspect, so that the dread of them gradually left the hearts of the troop, and they breathed again freely ; yet Tuflongbo gave the word for keener watchfulness than ever, as if the danger, though less apparent, were becoming more insidious.

Beautiful bright faces stooped down over the ardent Arum as he passed, and the fairest blew him kisses, though he sternly turned his face away ; then syren voices sang to him, but he closed his ears ; and invisible hands caressed him, and stroked his cheeks, but he only shuddered and pushed them off. Then the faces that had smiled scowled at him ; the syren voices hissed, and the light hands smote him ; but nothing cared he, for he had the remembrance of sweet Princess Myrrh in his heart. So the lovely demons tried to draw Yarrow out of his road, and even practised their witcheries on Tuflongbo himself ; but to no purpose whatever. They caught Walnut once, proving their stratagems deeper than his ; and also the adroit Orphry, whose skill their cunning laughed to scorn ; but both presently escaped them ; and after a little while, the spectres, finding their arts of beguiling all but useless to tempt Tuflongbo's people away from him, tried other expedients.

From their many-fingered and forked branches they

showered down golden fruit of the richest outward appearance. "Touch it not," cried the Leader; and though many looked covetously at this easy means of growing rich, not one stretched forth a disobedient hand except Bugloss. He stealthily took where he could, and stuffed his pockets full, and though the weight of the enchanted fruits was enough to drag him to the earth at every step, he had not the spirit to cast it away; and drag him to the earth it finally did, and as his fall was unobserved, he was left by the wayside to feed on his rich gatherings if he could. And when he grew hungry, he attempted to do so, but the taste of the fruit was more bitter than gall; and before long their golden appearance turned to corruption, and he was glad to fling them away.

Next the fiends fluttered little rags of parti-coloured cloth, and even Arum could not forbear looking with longing, wistful eyes at these, until Tuflongbo said: "Who that has true honour desires fame?" upon which he turned away satisfied. But Yarrow snatched at every bit he could reach, and bedizened himself over with his spoils, until he was no grander than a harlequin, and found himself tempted to many mean and cruel actions to retain them. But though he would never fling them away, their value was afterwards somewhat lessened in his estimation when he saw Betony wearing at Court a suit of the same; and even many less worthy persons, such as Bugloss, Wortleberry, and that race of heroes, permitted to deck themselves out in an imitative habit of a similar kind, which very many persons could not distinguish from the investiture of real fame.

They were now, to Tuflongbo's great relief, reaching the borders of this Spectral Valley, for in the passage through it his troop had been considerably thinned.



As soon as they crossed the frontier he therefore called a halt, and proceeding to number those who were left, he found there were only ten—Hawkweed, Arum, Yarrow, Bur, Borage, Box, Golden Rod, Bearded Crepis, Whin and Xanthium. Walnut and Orphry came up while the reckoning was being made, and after due repentance for their temporary desertion, they were restored to their previous rank.

“We must bivouac in this place to-night and refresh,” said Tufongbo, dispirited at the losses he had sustained. “This is neutral territory, and we shall be safe alike from the spectres that haunt the Valley of Temptation, and from the Serpentes, whose swampy country of Marshollos it will be our honourable and hazardous duty to journey across to-morrow. We must trust to charitable Wild-Grape for supper, since, I perceive, with regret, that Fennel and Juniper have fallen behind, like Lychnis, Sardony, and others. The delay will enable our deluded companions to overtake us, if they still survive, and I trust Hawkweed to keep watch, lest they should pass by in the darkness.”

And then the great Traveller threw himself down to rest and lay his plans for the coming day; and by and by little Content crept up to him and talked him round again into his usually happy and sprightly mood. And they both slept well after their fatigues.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE RETURN OF PRINCE POLYANTHUS.

THEY slept well, that is, so long as they were permitted to sleep at all ; but in the dead of the night the whole camp was aroused by the sounds of a shrill dispute. Tuflongbo, for the first instant, fancied he must be dreaming ; but the next he distinguished, beyond any hope of mistake, the conceited voice of Prince Polyanthus, natural for once, and very sharp in its displeasure, heaping reproaches on the presumptuous Snap-Dragon, who retorted in the same loud and angry tone. Then chimed in the feeble treble of poor Betony, saying he wondered how they could quarrel while dangers still environed them on every hand ; then there followed an enraged exclamation from Valerian, and eager vociferations from Fig, Dandelion and Abecedary : upon which, Dock and Dodder and the rest sat down on the ground in weariful patience, as no doubt they had often had occasion to do since Tuflongbo sent them away to Elfin Court, under the command of Prince Polyanthus, with the spoils of Rufnagumba and despatches for the Queen.

Tuflongbo groaned in spirit as he rose and presented himself before the angry and tumultuous crew. Each was desirous to have the first word in detailing his grievance, and it was a perfect strife of tongues until the Leader stopped his ears and refused to listen to any unless they could speak moderately and in order. They, nevertheless, continued to vociferate, unheard, for several minutes, until Hawkweed intimated that, as officer of



the watch, it would immediately become his duty to put them under arrest, unless they ceased to be disorderly. This threat took due effect, and after an angry pause, Prince Polyanthus was permitted to take the precedence in laying his case before Tuflongbo.

"This presumptuous fellow," began he, pointing at Snap-Dragon, who regarded him with obtrusive contempt—"this presumptuous fellow, whom you appointed my lieutenant, respectable Tuflongbo, began from the first step of our march to give himself the airs of a captain. He professed to know that of which he proved himself in twenty ways entirely ignorant. Through his blundering miscalculations we lacked provisions at various times; repeatedly we fell into dangers of which I was not pre-advised; and finally, instead of leading us on the direct road to Elfin Court, he tried for short cuts which turned out mazes of intricacy, and behold us now returned upon our steps by the most circuitous routes, that we might avoid the deadly Valley of Spectres. I demand that the presumptuous Snap-Dragon be forthwith degraded to serve in the ranks."

"You have said your say, Prince Polyanthus,—go. Now, Snap, let me hear you," said the Leader, briefly.

Then Snap-Dragon unbent his scornful lip and replied,—

"Gracious Tuflongbo, our failure is not my fault. Our noble and valiant commander, of whom I desire to speak with all fit respect," (and here he sneered at the prince with every feature of his face,) "spent every moment that should have been given to good counsel and careful plans, in curling his hair and perfuming his elegant person. Thus we lost valuable time, and if, to make up for it, I recommended venturesome passages

it was with the finest intentions. It has never been laid to the charge of any of my family that we shirked a difficulty or sneaked away from a danger; and though I would avoid being personal in all circumstances, I protest against serving any more under a captain who scents and curls."

Next Betony, as a fairy who had accidentally achieved for himself immortal distinction, was encouraged to state his case; but he confined himself to expressing a mild surprise how people could be quarrelsome when it was so much pleasanter to live at peace; and then he begged to be permitted to go to sleep, which Tuflongbo kindly allowed. After him, Dandelion, Fig, and Abecedary made out a grievance, and Valcrian also had something to say; and Phlox agreed with everybody in expressing entire dissatisfaction with whatever had happened; and when they had all made an end of speaking, the Leader called attention, and addressed the assembly with laconic severity.

"Troublesome folks! you must reduce to writing the statement of your frivolous wrongs, and I will forward the documents to the proper quarter. Queen Osmunda will appoint a commission to inquire into them, if she be so advised by her Minister, Prince Goldheart, and about half a century after you are all dead and buried a judgment may, perhaps, be arrived at, but, if not, the matter will be left to the decision of posterity. But, hear me, *you*, presumptuous Snap-Dragon, and *you*, proud Prince Polyanthus, more especially, if I hear any disputes or squabbles while you are with my troop, a drumhead court-martial shall sit upon you, and you know the inevitable consequence!"

And except that Polyanthus called Snap-Dragon a

Ruffian! and that Snap-Dragon called Polyanthus a *Water-Wagtail!* no more abusive language passed between them; and so that business was arranged. And as it still wanted three hours to dawn, every one lay down and slept but Hawkweed who was on guard; and there was silence in the camp. Before morning, however, Fennel and Juniper came in, leading Bugloss, who was in a most forlorn and battered condition; but they brought no tidings of Lychnis, Sardony, Mezereon, or of any of those who had dropt out of the band, and joined company with Nightshade, Belladonna, and the Enchanter Hollyherb, in the Valley of Temptation; and when day broke, and they were still missing, Tufsongbo regretfully gave the order to march without them.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE INVASION OF MARSHOLLOS.

DESERTION having begun in the famous Traveller's band, other difficulties and troubles were not long in following.

Poor Betony, by dint of enjoying various honours and privileges, had now begun to regard himself as a great hero; and when the Leader, in disposing his forces for the journey through Marshollos, the country of the formidable Serpentes, failed to appoint him to the command of a division, or to assign him any responsible post whatever, he began to whimper over his surprise and disappointment; and there were not wanting other discontented persons to back him up, and to insinuate

that Tuflongbo was jealous of the superior glory which covered the valiant destroyer of Rufnagumba. These seeds of rebellion were, however, sharply detected by Hawkweed, and cleverly picked out by the adroit Orphry; and the Leader being reluctant to lose supporters just at the outstart of a critical enterprise, soothed Betony's wounded feelings by having an empty waggon of the commissariat fitted up like a four-post bed, with deep-fringed curtains; and permitting him to travel in this easy, dignified way; sleeping mostly, but at intervals taking limited views of the country and its inhabitants, like the hero that he was, through narrow loopholes in the drapery. Fennel and Juniper grumbled at this useless addition to their burdens, but a trifle of extra pay soon pacified them; and afterwards all went harmoniously.

It was difficult work marching through this district of Marshollos; for there were no roads or even foot-tracks, and the ground was everywhere oozy and treacherous. Where it looked the greenest, there was it the most to be avoided; for under those complacent reeds lurked black quagmires deep enough to swallow up Tuflongbo and his whole band. Walnut and Orphry went in advance with Hawkweed to construct movable bridges by which to pass over the softest lakes of mud; and very skilfully they managed their engineering, engaging the confidence of all, and especially of their Leader. The band had thus penetrated about a third of the way into this wild country of the Serpentes, when, reaching the brow of a low hill, they looked down on a most strange and remarkable phenomenon. Tuflongbo commanded silence, that they might not attract the notice of the wonderful creatures below; and suggested eyes of ob-

ervation to all, that their singular practices, being testified to by so many credible witnesses, might not be called in question when he came to detail them before the Court and the disputatious Royal Society of Wise-acres.

And this was what the brave Adventurers beheld.

There was a deep river of mud and water, flowing through a narrow glen between shallow, sedgy banks, whereon lay coiled, twisted, wreathed, wriggled, and knotted, an incalculable number of the Serpentes. Now and then one lifted his hideous head, and darted at a little object on the ground, which forthwith began to execute the most eccentric bounds and leaps into the air, emitting during these evolutions a volley of terrified shrieks that made the blood run cold. Tuflongbo watched these gymnastics with anxious curiosity, and presently he was interested and delighted to see that the Serpentes were playing their fiendish shuttlecock with two balls instead of one; and so absorbed were they in their exciting game that, though the Adventurers had begun to speculate aloud and even noisily on their admirably graceful exercises, they drew on themselves no notice whatever. In making their marvellous gyrations, the balls appeared to fling out scraggy limbs, which were only not broken in falling to the ground because it was covered with thick mud and rushes; and once they continued to fly up and down, and round about, so long, without touching, that the cries they uttered dropt into hoarse howls of anguish, in which it seemed to Tuflongbo that he detected a familiar strain. He did not feel it expedient, however, to mention his suspicions yet; but waited to hear what his followers thought about it.

Dandelion supposed the shuttlecocks to be fretful por-



Tufongbo and Hawkweed watching the Electrical Serpents' game. P. 383

111

1

1

cupines, with whom the Serpentes were known to be at enmity ; while Fig argued that they were more probably hedgehogs ; but Hawkweed came up to the Leader and whispered,—

“Tuflongbo, those queer acrobats are no other than Aunt Spite and the malevolent Lobelia ; and the Serpentes are electrifying them—that’s it !”

“Are you quite sure ? Do not let us draw rash conclusions—give me my spectacles,” replied Tuflongbo ; and for some considerable time longer he watched the operations below with intense curiosity and satisfaction. He saw the Serpentes roll their balls over and over, and lick them into shape many times ; and then renew their game with fresh spirit, evidently deriving from the excitement the keenest enjoyment.

“I am afraid they *are* Aunt Spite and Lobelia,” said he at last ; “and a very serious thing it is, at their time of life, to be taking so much violent exercise—without considering the horrible fright.”

“You will deliver them ?” asked Hawkweed, cautiously.

“Well—*yes*. I dare say it would be considered a dereliction of duty if we did not ; but it is a pity the Serpentes don’t electrify them out of their lives !”

“Exactly so—let’s give ’em a chance ; there’s no hurry—we are very comfortable here,” suggested Hawkweed, shrewdly.

“True,” said Tuflongbo, with lazy acquiescence. And he continued to make his observations on the ways and customs of the Serpentes, and entered them in his note-book ; and when he had done that, time began to hang rather heavily on his hands, and he thought it would perhaps now be as well to go to the rescue of the



old fairies below ; so he announced Hawkweed's discovery to the troop, and led them down towards the playground of the lively jugglers.

But about midway the descent, the Leader was obliged to halt his band to enforce caution : " For," said he, " though the Serpentes are doubtless by this time well-nigh exhausted with their frolics, they still preserve electricity enough to give any of us an unpleasant shock. Therefore, roll down amongst them lumps of turf and other inanimate substances, that they may expend their remaining force upon them ; and while thus engaged, let the boldest amongst us rush in, and snatch away what remains of Aunt Spite and the malevolent Lobelia."

Walnut and Orphry, assisted by Juniper and Fennel, immediately set to work to obey their commander, and tumbled down amongst the Serpentes great blocks of rotten wood and earth ; which mode of attack took them by surprise, for they instantly retired to their mud, and burying their ugly bodies under its brown surface, erected their hideous heads, like a *chevaux de frise*, along the river-bank.

Down rushed instantly Arum and Tuflongbo, and seized the balls, but Tuflongbo quickly dropt his again, exclaiming angrily,—“ You odious, spiteful thing ! what do you bite me for ?” and she rolled over the slippery slope into the very midst of the enraged Serpentes, who gave her a united shock which sent her sky-high four-and-twenty times ; but at the last rebound, the adroit Orphry caught her, and carried her breathless and insensible towards the spot where Arum had already placed Lobelia in security.

While this was taking place, the Serpentes had had leisure to recover some of their powers of mischief, and

they glided stealthily from the muddy bank of the river towards Tuflongbo and his troop.

"Steady!" cried the Leader; "fall back, but fall back in order!" And acting upon this command, the whole band escaped except Bugloss, who was caught by a wily old snake and tossed up in the air like a flying shriek of agony; while a laughing voice at Tuflongbo's elbow said,—

"That's the first time lying Bugloss has been *shocked* in *his* precious life!" And turning his head, the Leader perceived that the witty Lychnis had rejoined him. He vouchsafed him a displeased recognition, and the band continued to retreat until they regained the hill whence they had descended to the rescue of the electrified fairies, and there they found Betony lying on the ground, weeping and roaring bitterly between paroxysms of astonishment as he pointed towards his impromptu travelling carriage.

"Well, what's the matter *now?*" demanded Tuflongbo, in a surly tone; for he really began to think that there was no end to the trouble and inconvenience of these feeble, imbecile folks.

"They ejected me! They jerked me out of my comfortable bed! They wrenched every bone of my miserable body out of joint!" gasped Betony, with many sobs. "Dear Tuflongbo, I rely entirely upon you; do something! pray do!"

The Leader stood considering, but Bur, inquisitive to see who *they* were, introduced his head between the curtains of the litter, and perceived a coil of young Serpentes, which, resenting his impertinent curiosity, immediately gave him a shock which threw him off his centre of gravity for ever so long. The intruders were,

however, turned out by the adroit Orphry, and flung down into the mud below ; just at the same moment as the hapless Bugloss, expedited by a very severe shock, was hurled into the midst of the confusion. After not a few frightful writhings and contortions, he at length came to himself, and then Tuflongbo cried, "Pack and away! quick march! Let us get out of this accursed region with the best haste we can!" And not a single voice was found to dispute the order.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE HUMILIATION OF PRINCE POLYANTHUS.

THEY retreated in tolerable order for some distance, but Bugloss, made sore both in body and mind by his late public humiliations, determined not to be alone in his personal experience of Serpentine Electricity. He, therefore, lagged in the rear, where Aunt Spite and Lobelia were clinging to the fringe of Betony's waggon, to help themselves along; and when serenity began once more to pervade the bosoms of the Leader and his people, he gave an alarm that they were pursued, which spread an instantaneous panic through the ranks. In spite of Tuflongbo's shouts and exhortations, his troops broke their lines, and took to dishonourable flight in every direction, leaving him alone, with little Content, Bearded Crepis, Arum, and the invalids.

"This is truly discouraging!" cried the great Traveller. "Fools that they are! they rush into the very danger they would avoid!"

And so it proved to be, for though they had escaped the main tribe of the Serpentes, little colonies were settled in almost every quagmire in the district, some of them of a very peculiar malevolence of character indeed ; and as the flying, scattered troops floundered into the bogs, each scared individual received rapid shocks of greater or less severity. It was noon and past before any of the recreants began to rally to their Leader again, and a deplorable figure most of them then presented.

As for Prince Polyanthus, the Serpentes seemed not only to have played at ball with him, but at cricket-ball, and that in a swamp of most ill-savoured mud ; for he was grievously battered, he limped with both legs, his hair was out of curl, and not all the odours of Araby could have sweetened his elegant person, without a long course of Turkish baths to precede. He wrung his hands ; he shook his head as if its unpleasantness were insupportable ; he cast himself on the ground in despair. He said he hated himself, and could never feel like a dandy again ! But Tuflongbo was too full of business to soothe his wounded dignity then ; so, finding himself treated as a mere common person, he gradually subsided into silence and private life, hiding in a corner of Betony's litter, by the kind little fellow's permission.

The Leader made no allowance for the weariness and complaints of his shattered band, but marched steadily on till nightfall, and then halted. The next morning they were up and off again, and a long day's tramp they had, unlightened by any event worth chronicling. Tuf-longbo said the flatness of the journey was a judgment on them ; they had proved themselves unequal to meeting dangers and adventures ; they had fallen into the snares of paltry temptations ; and it was clear to him

that nothing but a season of extreme tedium and monotony would renovate their weakened nerves. These reproaches were received in sorrowful silence. Most of the great Traveller's companions knew that they were but too well deserved; and for a whole week after they had only forced marches over dry, sandy plains, where nothing stirred but clouds of dust; and through dull avenues of stony trees, where they could hear their own hearts beat in the dreamy stillness. But at the week's end they had recovered their good looks, their courage, their strength, and their tone, and announced the same with due humility to the Leader.

"Thank your lucky stars that you *have* recovered them," replied he, "for you will soon stand in need of all, and more than all, you ever possessed! Another twelve hours' march will bring us to the vast Cavern of the Subterranean Cataracts, which is infested by demon-plants, by flying beasts, by crawling fish, by wingless birds, and every horrible shape that delights in darkness. Let me here warn all stragglers that I shall not linger to pick them up; each one of you must rely on his own fleetness of foot and quickness of eye to deliver him from the hideous night of this dreadful place. And now, forward!"

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE CAVERN OF SUBTERRANEAN CATARACTS.

TOWARDS the close of the following day, Tuflongbo and his people were made aware, by the solemn voice of many waters in the distance, that they were drawing near to

the wonderful Cavern of the Subterranean Cataracts. It was not the will of the Leader to enter it while his band were weary with a thirsty march; so he commanded them to bivouac amongst the bushes that masked its approach, to refresh themselves with an ample ration of provisions, and to sleep securely until the morning. But at the first point of day he was up, reconnoitring with Hawkweed, Walnut, and Orphry; and the result of their observation was that the mouth of the cavern appeared to be quite unguarded,—probably because it lay so far from the lines of civilisation, or the chance of invasion by hostile tribes, which would enable them to enter it by surprise or stratagem.

When the day had been up about an hour, a stealthy call to duty sounded through the camp; and in a few moments every one was alert, and shod with shoes of silence. Tuflongbo now ordered Prince Polyanthus and Betony out of the litter, and stowed into it little Content, Aunt Spite, and Lobelia, as least able to surmount the hardships of the coming adventures; and having placed it in the centre of the troop, with Bearded Crepis and Golden Rod on either side to guard it, the band marched softly down a steep stair in the rocks towards the yawning mouth of the cavern. As they approached, the threatening roar of the cataracts became more and more distinct, until the whole air throbbed as with incessant thunder, and no one could hear the voice of his comrade who marched close beside him.

On this occasion presumptuous Snap-Dragon had claimed a post in the advanced guard, which had been reluctantly allowed him by Tuflongbo. Neither Arum nor Yarrow loved his companionship, because he was more rash than steadfast, more boastful than brave, and

more vain than deserving. He plunged headlong into enterprises that he had only skill enough to ruin, and claimed an honour where he had perpetrated a folly; and though he could not be said to shun danger, he often made shadows of difficulty into substances of perilous risk, and then vaunted himself like the noisy windbag he was known to be.

He continually tendered loud assurances of his valour and prowess, because he was aware that many persons had a habit of calling them in question; and as he tiptoed down the steps in the rocks, if anybody could have heard him in that tumultuous uproar of falling waters they would have found he was chanting a strain homeric to his own imaginary honour and glory; defying the horrors of the cavern in whatever shape, and challenging flying beasts, crawling fishes, wingless birds, and demon plants to attack or even resist his tremendous power and daring. Arum and Yarrow saved their breath for a better purpose, and as their valour was beyond a doubt they could well afford to do so; and presently they came within a few paces of the gloomy scene on which they were to enter.

A broad stream rushed furiously out of the cavern, bearing on its foam-white surface gigantic bones of unknown monsters; tangled knots of snaky hair clinging to eyeless skulls; uprooted trees, in whose wreathing, fungus-like leaves stirred a horrible life in death; and thick lily-cupped flowers, spotted like vases of poison, which they were. The heavy torrent had scooped out for itself a deep bed in the rocks, and after it had escaped from the darkness, it went roaring on its dreadful way down a fearful precipice, in three tremendous leaps, at the bottom of which it seethed and boiled an illimitable

gulf. None could look down upon it without risk of falling fascinated into its purple waves; therefore Tuf-longbo forbade any of his followers to tempt the danger.

He was himself the first to enter the Cavern of the Subterranean Cataracts, Hawkweed being at his elbow, and Arum, Yarrow, and Snap-Dragon close behind. They took the right bank of the mighty river, and, after proceeding about fifty paces, they perceived that the stream, though considerably narrower, ran its frenzied course here with the same maddened fury as without. It seemed as if the waves were rushing away from some awful place, pursued by demons charged to prevent their escape; for in their hoarse turmoil there was a wailing undertone of exceeding anguish, as of lost or imprisoned spirits. Tuf-longbo's blood ran cold to hear it, but he kept steadfastly on, neither speaking himself, nor suffering others to speak, while that fearful moan rolled down on the flood. Deeper and deeper into the darkness marched the Adventurers; together, in a compact mass, close on the steps of their Leader. And now from the opposite side of the river began slowly to peer from the hollows eyes without faces, gleaming in the blackness, watchful, un-sleeping, unwinking, like stars in the midnight, when the clouds are broken. Then heavily waved the colourless branches of trees, that were demons in likeness to sun-grown ash-trees and holly; and struck with their clammy leaves the shivering cheeks of the heroes. And hairy monsters paddled the air, with webbed feet and basilisk wings, howling and hissing at them; and long slimy things, and fat speckled things, and cold reptile things, crept and crawled over their feet; and plumed awful creatures caught them by the hand, and bit them, and

shrieked like birds against a storm. And always that fearful moan of exceeding anguish rolled down on the flood.

Then resounded a distant echo that echoed up, and up, and up the cavern, as if the wild spirits of all the winds were broken loose together, and were advancing like a conquering army to trample them to dust. With a swell, and a roll, and a loud clamour of hoarse shouting, that reverberated in the cavern roof, as though the mighty sea surges were lashing the rocks beneath, that awful invisible power swept on its way. Tuflongbo's heart did not fail him here, though even Yarrow would have proposed a retreat.

"We shall be scattered before this host of tempests, like chaff at the blast of a bellows!" said he.

"I will perish rather than go back!" cried the Leader, and not another word spake he.

So they advanced, and the unseen legion advanced also, and drove over them, and passed by; millions of wild weird faces borne on its impalpable wings; and when each looked towards his comrade, not one of the band had fallen. This escape inspired the truly brave with great thankfulness; but presumptuous Snap-Dragon, imagining that he only owed his preservation to his own steady stand against the blasts, began to testify his self-conceit by various words and deeds expressive of contempt for the dangers of the cavern, which were, he said, greatly overrated.

He made mocking salutations to the hideous flying beasts; he kissed his hand to the solemn, watching eyes beyond the flood; he plucked at the sepulchral fungus-trees, and jested with the plumed creatures that bit him. Tuflongbo paid little heed to his bravado—supposing





The fate of Snapdragon.

that he was trying, in an extremity of fear, to bolster up his courage with loud phrases ; indeed, he pitied him from his heart, hoping, at the same time, that this braggart spirit would not spread. His silent indifference, however, provoked Snap-Dragon to greater presumptions still. He fell out of the solid ranks, and walked carelessly, singing, on the brink of the river, which tossed up angry spray in his face, as if mocking at his mockeries. Then he stooped down and furl'd his fingers in its inky blackness, and tore up a bunch of reeds, and stuck them in his cap for a trophy.

Thrice did Golden Rod cry out a caution ; twice did Bur admonish him that there would be no research made for stragglers ; and once did little Content look out of his litter, and beseech him with tears to take warning of his peril in time. But Snap-Dragon only grew all the more venturesome for these expostulations ; and when he saw how his companions observed and wondered, he continued his defiant gestures with a coarser ostentation than before. But at last, as he was leaning down to pluck one of the spotted lily poison-cups, that the waves drifted close to the bank, a fleshless hand came up out of the water, and grasped his with the strength of a vice. He tried to wrest it free and to fly, but was still kept in his bent attitude by its desperate clutch ; he struggled and tugged with the energy of life against death ; but it was of no avail. His foot slipped on the slimy weeds, and the bony fingers whirled him away into the centre of the torrent ; there an eddy caught him, and dashed him round and round like a fragile straw, and finally the river rushed away with him through the darkness, then out into the wan daylight, over the precipice of three tremendous leaps, and down into the illimitable gulf !

His comrades beheld his fate with horror-stricken hearts ; and the fearful moan of exceeding anguish that rolled down on the flood was swollen with his too late and bitter lamentations !

“ March on,” said the Leader, firmly ; “ we cannot save him ! All Sheneland could not save him ; for the Ondines have borne him away to the water-world.”

And the band marched on in mournful silence, steadily together as before.

It was night ere they reached the first of the Subterranean Cataracts ; and then a council was held to consider whether the band should bivouac there or journey on. Some of the weaker adventurers, such as Betony, Prince Polyanthus, and Bur, who was getting into years, felt fatigue, but even they were in favour of proceeding, rather than of resting in this haunt of demons. So a change was made in the occupants of the litter, to enable the troop to get along without risking the loss of any of their number. Tuflongbo took little Content on his shoulder, and Aunt Spite and Lobelia were ordered to trudge afoot for a few hours ; while Betony, Prince Polyanthus, and old Bur rested in the litter.

Only half a ration of food could, unfortunately, be served out that night, because the provisions were running short ; and a few individuals clamoured discontentedly for more, until Tuflongbo exhibited himself and little Content supping on a fragment of dry crust, while stoical Box, having declined his own share, that others might have a little more, was allaying the pangs of hunger by sucking the pole of his lance.

“ But it is very hard to go on short commons,” muttered Borage.

“ Half a loaf is better than no bread,” replied Box.

"I never was so wretched in my life before!" cried Aunt Spite.

"Never mind; it will be all the same fifty years hence," said the philosophical consoler.

"I foresee that we shall have an awful night," groaned Lobelia.

"But it will be over to-morrow morning," returned Box.

Then the band, having finished their meagre supper, fell into single file as Tuflongbo commanded, and the nature of the road required; and weary, footsore, hungry, depressed as they were, they marched on with a gallantry that was beyond all praise. The cataract descended in one unbroken bound from a shelf of rock that was six hundred fairy feet high; the precipitous sides of the cavern arched up and over it, there being but one narrow, dizzy cornice-ledge by which to mount and pass through. The torches were lighted, and each Adventurer carried one to guide his own steps; so that the appearance of Tuflongbo and his people as they went up was like that of fireflies clinging to a wall.

In the flaring light of the torches, ever and anon grotesque forms appeared, laughing and shouting till the cavern rang again with their mimic mirth. The famous Traveller himself led the way, with little Content perched upon his shoulder; and great were the wonders the child beheld from his lofty position. Sometimes the strange things would come quite close to him, and vanish in a peal of laughter; then they would stroke his hair, and leave brilliant drops sparkling in it, but he always shook them off, as his protector bade him.

"We must carry nothing out of this awful place," said he. "Were we tempted to eat of the demon trees

in our hunger, or to gather the glittering gems that shine like eyes in the walls, we should carry away with us a taint that would expose us for ever to the persecutions of all wicked and lawless things."

So when Tuflongbo gained the upper level of the first cataract, he waited, and bade all his people pass by him, saying to each as he went: "Have ye clean hands?" And all their hands were clean except those of Bugloss, who excused the stains on his, by saying that he had been in the cavern before, and that he had never since that time been able, with all his diligence, to scour out the marks then acquired. The Leader put him aside and bade him wait until all the rest had filed past; and then, turning to the foaming flood, he said to him, sternly,—"Wash now, and wash here."

But Bugloss remonstrated, replying that he dared not; that the miserable fate of Snap-Dragon might be his also, were he so foolhardy as to attempt it; and moreover, he explained, that though the water looked black and cold as death, it was scalding as fire to the touch.

"Hot as fire, is it?" said the Leader, grimly; "the likelier then to purify these foul hands of thine! Wash now, and wash here!"

So Bugloss, crying with pain and fear, did as he was bidden; but the stains were so engrained in his flesh, that though the skin peeled off, still they were there.

"You see, Tuflongbo, it is of no avail!" said he, humbly, spreading forth his snaky, spotted hands. And the Leader then permitted him to rise and follow behind the rest.

And afterwards they marched forward again, and

during the dead of the night they passed two more cataracts, each higher than the other. At the last the demon things had ceased to show themselves, but there brooded over the water a horror of silence and gloom, that was even more terrible still than were the flying hairy monsters or the wingless birds. Then a fainting murmur of fear quivered on many lips, till the stoical Box cried out in a ringing voice,—

“Despair not! The darkest hour comes before the dawn!” and the echoes of the cavern pealed back again in every accent of hope and cheer: “Despair not! The darkest hour comes before the dawn!”

And a very little while after, they saw a pale light shining in the distance like a star, and shooting a gleam down the frothed waters, as though it were an arrow pointed towards them; so they extinguished their torches, and guided themselves by its lustre, until, as they drew nearer, they saw that it was morning shining in at the eastern mouth of the great Cavern of Subterranean Cataracts, and, hurrying forth, they found themselves, to their intense joy, once more under the open sky, and looking down from the peak of a lofty mountain upon the beautiful Valley of a Thousand Rills.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE VALLEY OF A THOUSAND RILLS.

A **LOUD** cheer broke from the whole band at the sight of the greenness and fertility, and they halted there straightway for a term of rest and refreshment. Little



buttons of mushrooms grew profusely on the mountain slopes, and there was also a strange flower of a pinkish tint, which contained in its bell-shaped cup a fragrant creamy essence in which to stew them. Immediately fifty diligent hands were employed in gathering these luxurious productions; and Aunt Spite, who possessed a superior receipt for dressing them, was put in charge of the culinary department; which, being well watched, be it mentioned to her credit, she superintended to perfection.

Tuflongbo with all his troop breakfasted sumptuously, having found a light, wholesome bread-fruit to eat with their mushrooms. Hunger was the best seasoning; and the meal was concluded with a fresh, perfumed dessert of wild scarlet strawberries, and invigorating draughts of sweet crystal water from the nearest of the Thousand Rills.

Little Content lay down under a sheltering bush in a mood of passive enjoyment, thinking that the Fair Valley looked as the Enchanted Forest used to do before his troubles befell him. The streams flowed like slender threads of liquid silver amongst verdant and purple meadows, knee-deep in clover, and the scent of bean blossoms, and hum of bees, was wafted by on every breath that blew. Long after Tuflongbo and his people had dropped into a calm day-sleep, after their dreary night journey, he lay dreaming awake, and longing for a sight of his father and mother, and of his once pleasant home; until, presently, there came to him a tiny light-winged zephyr, and whispered, "I saw thy mother yesternight, Content."

"How looked she? What did she?" cried Content, with eager affection.

“She looked sad and lonely for want of thee; her eyes were red with much sorrow and weeping. She wandered to and fro in the wild ways of the forest, calling on the name of her little son, and bitterly lamenting. Every evening after dark she keeps a vigil out in the solitudes, hoping against hope that in some lucky hour thou wilt find thy way back to her.”

“Fly swiftly, light-winged zephyr, and tell her I am coming! Let her be patient, and win my father home by her old loving, tender words; so that when I return, we may all live together happily, as we did before that miserable morning when Fairy Nettle cropt up amongst the stones by our cottage door.”

Then the zephyr stole a kiss from his pretty lips, and flew away to his mother, and gave her little Content's message, and cheered and comforted her with the stolen kiss; and it seemed to her the next morning as if the slaty clouds were drifting away from the sky, and as if the stony ranks of trees were budding anew into the lustrous green foliage of early spring. And Father Sorrel took his axe on his shoulder, and went out to his work once more without making an angry storm with his wife.

After the zephyr was gone, Content fell fast asleep, and slept so soundly that he did not hear the duty-call at noon, or any of the preparations for the march through the lovely Valley of a Thousand Rills; and when he awoke he was alone in the litter, being carried in the centre of the troop as before, by the strong-armed Fennel with Juniper to help him. Tuflongbo was stepping out gallantly at the head of his people, singing a pleasant stave which they all took up in chorus; and little Content, feeling lighter and livelier than he

had ever done since he started with the famous Traveller on this great journey, struck in with his shrill, musical pipe, and sang too.

“Steadfast and merry, now,
Swift, without hurry, now,
Forward, straight forward, and shoulder to shoulder !
Down the steep mountain side,
By the clear silver tide,
Forward, straight forward, and shoulder to shoulder !
Hail, Tufsongbo, hail !

“Brethren, one and all,
Whether we stand or fall,
Onward, straight onward, and every step true !
Hands be right ready all,
Eyes be right steady all,
Onward, straight onward, and every step true.
Hail, Tufsongbo, hail !

“Whether ye laugh or cry,
Whether ye live or die,
Follow your Leader, and keep your arms bright !
Honour and glory fly,
Where greatest perils lie,
Follow your Leader, and keep your arms bright !
Hail, Tufsongbo, hail !”

Every foot kept time to the tune, beating the ground as in a sonorous bass. And all through the shining afternoon the band marched by beautiful fields, and tracked the course of glittering rills for many winding miles. But towards dusk there appeared dark clouds in the sky, and a sighing wind ran up the streams, which rose, and swelled, and overflowed their banks in a marvellously brief space. Tufsongbo and Hawkweed, however, saw the danger, and were ready for it when it came. Every one was commanded to fasten two corks to his shoes ; and to the litter, the commissariat waggons, and the bearers of Rufnagumba's spoils, was attached a

proportionably greater number to float their weight. And the preparations were not made a moment too soon ; for just as all were ready, and linked together by the hands, like a living raft, the storm broke ; the thousand rills swept together in one mighty flood, and rolled through the valley, carrying away trees, rocks, flowers, mushrooms, strawberries, and all Tuflongbo's band upon its stemless tide.

"We began to rejoice too soon," said the Leader. "We are not yet out of evilly-enchanted regions ; and when danger lurks hidden in soft, fair scenes, it is apt to catch us unawares, and bring us into deeper peril than when we visibly confront it in such awful places as Marshollos or the Cavern of the Subterranean Cataracts."

But if they had rejoiced prematurely, that was no sound cause why they should now mourn out of reason, or make the night echo with vain cries for help, which Betony, Polyanthus, Fig, Aunt Spite and others did. Tuflongbo several times besought them to be still, and to drown with dignity, if drown they must ; but they refused to listen to his advice, and loudly blamed him for not preventing the inundation that had swept them away. And throughout the murky, wind-beaten night the whole band drifted on the stream ; their position made more terrible by the syrens, with sea-green hair, that came up in the foam, and tried to pluck their hands apart, and carry them down to their under-water caves ; where they would have strangled them in the coils of their locks, and then flung them out as food for the fishes. But they held fast, each to the other, with the energy of despair ; so that in the morning, when they were cast adrift on the steep, rocky shore of a little island, and the

Leader numbered them, not one was lost—not a single one—which was truly a miracle, and a cause of thankfulness to all.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE CONQUEST OF THE DEGENERATE TURTLES.

HARDLY had the hapless Adventurers recovered from the shock of being washed violently ashore than a singular flap, flapping was heard, something between the thrash of a flail and the sound of a muffled bell-clapper. Walnut and Orphry were immediately sent to reconnoitre, and after little more than five minutes' absence, they returned in all haste to announce to the Leader that they were landed in a hostile country, and must prepare for a terrible struggle.

“These are the rocks of the degenerate Turtles, who, from the most polite and amiable race in Sheneland, have become utter barbarians,” Walnut hurriedly explained. “The family of the sovereign happens at this instant to be just round the corner of those weed-festooned rocks; and the flap, flapping we hear is, I regret to say, but the too familiar tune of domestic discord.”

Tuflongbo shrugged his shoulders and said it could not be helped, but if they found the Turtles snappishly inclined, he supposed his people could snap too, and he gave a significant glance at the weapons of his followers as he spoke. Thus appealed to they indulged themselves in a loud challenge of defiance, which immediately brought the king of the rebellious Turtles from beyond the rocks, with all his friends and relations after him.

The famous Traveller judged it expedient under the peculiar circumstances to try mediation first. He therefore despatched an embassy to meet the King, with Mezeleon at the head of it, commissioned to treat for peace and to offer terms of pardon to the rebels in the name of Queen Osmunda, on the simple conditions that they should make apology for past offences, and pay into the royal treasury the arrears of tribute that had now been withheld for nearly three generations. Mezeleon was eminently fitted for his task; he approached the revolted sovereign with courteous gestures of dignified respect, and threw his proposals into the most eloquent language his tongue could command. But King Turtle cut his oration short in its most flowery paragraph, by flapping on the ground in a fury, and shouting aloud these treasonable words,—

“Pay tribute to Queen Osmunda? Never! My ancestors did, but I am of freer mind. If your sovereign claims aught of me, let her come and take it, an’ she *dare!* I am lord paramount of all I survey. No more petticoat government for me!” And with that he snapped his jaws so near to the plenipotentiary’s handsome nose that Mezeleon started back and felt for the feature with intense anxiety; happily it still remained in its due position on his face, but the shock had been exceedingly painful to his feelings, and he did not easily get over it.

After this flagrant insult to her Majesty in the person of her viceroy and ambassador, the deputation at once withdrew, and Mezeleon returned to Tuflongbo with a declaration of war, stating that there was no chance whatever of bringing the barbarous revolters to terms, and, therefore, the best thing to do was immediately to

proceed to the extermination of the King and all his rebel crew. And forthwith both sides began to range themselves in order of battle. Tuflongbo, the ardent Arum and Yarrow leading on the Queen's Adventurers, and the heavy battalions of the Turtles being commanded by their self-elected King in person.

The Turtles, traditionally a mild people, on this occasion testified a tumultuous ferocity and an eagerness to charge the gallant little troop of Adventurers which were terrible to behold. But Hawkweed saw coming panic and irresolution in their blinking eyes, and rightly conjectured that their method of warfare was as barbarous as their manners. They endeavoured to intimidate their foe by noisy demonstrations of force, which ended in ignominious defeat if the enemy made a determined stand. This, as a matter of course, the seasoned troop of Tuflongbo did; and when the contumacious King advanced with an air of being about to eat them all up, they discharged against him and his supporters a flight of arrows which stuck in the joints of their armour, and gave them a quaint resemblance to porcupines in masquerade. They did not wait for a second discharge of Tuflongbo's artillery, but turned and fled, flapping in their cumbersome shells, and so blinded by rage and terror that many tripped and rolled over on their backs, when they were easily made prisoners, and among them was the King himself with his chief wife and his eldest daughter, who were taken captive by the ardent Arum, and led forthwith into the presence of Queen Osmunda's travelling representative.

Tuflongbo, always polite, especially where a conquered enemy was in question, received the noble prisoners with grave civility, but the King, though humiliated, was

not humbled, and he roughly refused to make any submission.

Thrice did the Leader put the question to him distinctly, "Will you yield, O revolted King of the Turtles, and pay tribute to Queen Osmunda, or will you not?" And thrice did the obstinate prisoner return the defiant answer, "I will not."

"Then you must be turned over on your back until you do; Fennel and Orphry, perform your duty," said Tuflongbo, with soldier-like severity; and forthwith the King was quietly disposed on his back, so that he could not recover himself, and a similar appeal was made to his chief wife and his eldest daughter, who, proving equally contumacious, were likewise laid helplessly on their backs; and thus it happened to all the rebels in succession, until the rocky island was completely subdued to the authority of the Queen's Adventurers.

This desirable result being accomplished, the degenerate Turtles were left ranged on their broad backs, feebly waving their paws in the air; while quick-sighted Hawkweed led an exploring party round the island to discover any spoils that might be worth carrying to Elfin Court as honourable trophies of their conquest. And presently they arrived at the royal residence, where were found curious foreign cups of gold and pearl shell, and jewels of unparalleled lustre that far exceeded in value the arrears of tribute due to the exchequer of Sheneland.

Tuflongbo joyfully commanded these treasures to be secured, and having seen them safely packed, and the waggons containing them afloat, he took possession also of the King's pleasure yacht, which was moored in a little cove below the palace crag, and ordered all his

people, except Fennel, to go on board. He then drew up a written form of apology addressed to Queen Os-munda, and carried it to the now nearly exhausted rebel King, and asked him if he would sign it.

"The tribute we have taken with liberal interest ; all you have to do is to affix your name to this formal document," Tuflongbo explained.

"Turn me over," gasped the rebel, "and I'll do anything !" And having fulfilled his promise, the King was expertly set on his legs again by the strong-armed Fennel, with an injunction not to stir until the pleasure yacht which had been confiscated to the service of the Adventurers was out of sight. He had learned his lesson too perfectly to need any repetition of it ; so he remained as still as a stone until the white sail of his ship and the floating treasure waggons disappeared beyond the horizon ; after which in a deeply dejected frame of mind he set himself to the task of reinstating his poor subjects right side up, leaving his Queen until the last ; for she was of a despotic temper, and he knew he should have to suffer penalties from her, for having preferred submission to death in a hopeless cause.

How the quarrel between them concluded, tradition does not say ; but the tribute due from the King of the Turtle Isles was ever after remitted to the Exchequer of Sheneland with undeviating regularity.

CHAPTER LXIX.

ON THE HOMEWARD MARCH.

THE Adventurers had a most beautiful sail until the evening, when the wind rose and blew tempestuously. All night they were at the mercy of the boiling waves ; but at the first streak of dawn, Hawkweed descried lines of breakers, and announced that they were approaching the northern coast of Sheneland. The Adventurers crowded eagerly to the look-out, and rejoiced in their hearts at the prospect of being soon again safely landed on their native shores. The ardent Arum overflowed with silent delight to think of his approaching union with his sweet betrothed, the glad-hearted Princess Myrrh ; and even Tuflongbo, though honour and glory were nothing new to him, enjoyed in anticipation the pleasure he should give to Queen Osmunda and the Court by the relation of his adventures and discoveries ; and also the envy, mortification, and incredulity he should excite amongst his rivals and enemies, the Royal Society of Wisacres.

And in due time they landed on the low, shelving northern coast, which, though thinly peopled and the least attractive district in Sheneland, was, nevertheless, a part of their dear home and country. No one was in sight except the old fisherman mending his nets, who had, on a previous occasion, taught Tuflongbo how to cross over to the snow-white shores of Aplepivi ; and with him the troops had a little conversation while he prepared for them a hospitable meal of his most delicate

fish, of which, from long previous fasting, they now stood in great need.

When they had eaten, they were counselled to take a nap ; but many, from joy and excitement, could not sleep a wink, and lay with eyes awake, longing for the moment when their Leader would set them in order for their triumphal march to Elfin Court. But though they could not doze, they could dream and rest their wearied limbs ; so that when that day and the next night were over they all arose, fresh, vigorous, and cheerful as on the very first morning of their journey. Tuflongbo was proud and happy to see them in such good condition, and gave them much commendation for the air of valour that embellished their shining countenances.

“For my part,” said he, “I would as lief have been born without a skin, as born a coward ; to be a coward is to be without a moral skin ; to be doubly, trebly sensitive to every pain and danger ; to be sensitive even to the terror of shadows and vapours !”

The whole band, brave and nervous alike, cheered this great moral truth, and when the expression of brotherly union was ended, Tuflongbo placed his troops in the following order for the march, which would occupy about three days.

The Great Traveller, with little Content on his shoulder, and Arum and Yarrow on either hand, took the head of the column ; then came Hawkweed, Walnut, and Orphry bearing victorious banners of laurel silk, richly blazoned ; next followed the fringed litter of Betony, the slayer of the terrible Rufnagumba ; after him went those who carried the Dragon's spoils, namely, Hawthorn and Elder, Dodder and Dock, two and two. Behind them were the courteous Mezereon and Phlox,

laden with despatches, the Leader's journals, sketch-books, and maps; Abecedary, Dandelion, Lychnis, and Fig came next; after them Bur, Borage, Box, and Bearded Crepis; then Aunt Spite and Lobelia, with Bugloss, Xanthium, Whin, and Valerian to keep watch over their malevolent dispositions; then the proud and wealthy Prince Polyanthus, washed, curled, scented, and dressed as elegantly as the fragments of his wardrobe would permit, and surrounded by a guard of honour as a personage of title and distinction. The waggons of the commissariat, and those containing the treasures found in the Palace of the King of the Turtle Rocks, kept by Fennel and Juniper, brought up the rear, with the rank and file of supernumeraries and camp followers.

Before setting out on their glorious return to Court, Tuflongbo gave his gallant people an eloquent and touching address,—

“Brothers in Adventure, in Fortune and Misfortune, we are now on our homeward march,” said he, and his voice was full of an emotion which communicated a sympathetic thrill to every breast. “Of those who cast in their lot with us for the hazardous journey through the Enchanted Forest of Stone, all are here save *three*. Deep is our sorrow for the chivalrous Daffodil whom we laid in his glorious grave with his yellow flag over him, and his sensitive Mimosa by his side, in that wild desert where we fought our great battle with the Giants. The Black Bat watches there still for our mourning. And keen is our regret for the presumptuous Snap-Dragon, who mocked at the water-spirits in the awful Cavern of Subterranean Cataracts, and was borne away by the avenging river to the Illimitable Gulf. And great is our


anxiety for the critical Sardony, who ridiculed danger in the Valley of Spectral Temptations, and was taken in the toils of Belladonna. Him we may meet again, the wiser and the sourer for many bitter experiences; but Daffodil and Snap-Dragon we shall behold no more—those who go forth to Shadowland, or are borne away by Ondines to the water-world, return to Sheneland never, *never* again!

“Still let us be gay of heart, for we have done our duty! Rufnagumba is slain, the Giants are defeated, the rebellious King of the Turtle Rocks is reduced to submission, and we have a thousand stories of hair-breadth escapes to tell which will enrich the royal archives of romance for generations to come; and cause fairies yet unborn to laud the names of Tuffongbo and his gallant companions in Adventure!!!”

At this all the band tossed up their caps and shouted triumphantly; after which they bade farewell to the fisherman, who still went on mending his nets by the sea, and marched steadily, gaily away, keeping time to their steps with a warlike song:—

“ We are coming, coming, coming,
 Brave, victorious from the fight;
 We are coming, coming, coming
 Foes to evil, friends to right!
 Banners flying, flying, flying,
 On the wings of every breeze,
 With Tuffongbo's name undying,
 Over land and over seas!

“ We are coming, coming, coming,
 Loud the triumph, great the prize,
 We are coming, coming, coming,
 For our meed in elfin eyes.



HALT BY CLUTCH'S UNSUNNED GARDEN. 417

Trumpets sounding, sounding, sounding,
On the eager, echoing gale,
Great Tuflongbo's name resounding,
Over hill and over dale."

CHAPTER LXX.

THE HALT BY CLUTCH'S UNSUNNED GARDEN.

THE troops marched nearly as long as day lasted without any sense of fatigue, but when they passed the Lily-bed by the Water-course where poor little Frail was buried, after she perished in the snow by the neglect of her cruel sister Clutch, the Leader suggested a halt and refreshment. His people, however, were so eager to get on that he permitted them to proceed as far as the Enclosed Garden where the Sun never Shone; and here, at last, they consented to rest for the night.

Up to this period, nothing had been said either by Tuflongbo or the ardent Arum on the subject of Aunt Spite or Lobelia having been instrumental in misleading the fair Princesses Myrrh and Mimosa, out of which cruel stratagem had ultimately issued the death of the younger sister and of the chivalrous Daffodil. When the wicked cronies had been found by the Adventurers, they were undergoing the terrible shocks of the Electrical Serpentes of Marshollos; and humanity forbade to reproach them after their rescue, so utterly deplorable was their condition. Then came the difficult passage through the Cavern of Subterranean Cataracts, the inundation in the Valley of a Thousand Rills, the wreck on the Rocks of the Turtles, and finally, the voyage to

the Northern Coast of Sheneland ; all of which had occupied the Leader's mind too fully to afford any leisure for the despatch of judicial business.

But now, being in a manner at home, the perils of his adventures past, and nothing but peace and prizes to anticipate, it became his duty to disembarass Bugloss, Xanthium, Whin, and Valerian, of their unpleasant office in guarding against the malicious propensities of the two ancient shrews ; but still, being reluctant to inaugurate his return by an act of severity and punishment, he merely caused it to be intimated to them, with all due courtesy and firmness, that they were now free to depart about their own urgent private affairs, which must have been much neglected in their prolonged absence from home.

Aunt Spite pouted her lip, and Lobelia scowled malevolently, when this gentle hint of dismissal was conveyed to them ; and equally insensible of Tuflongbo's generosity and their own iniquities, they had the hardihood to expostulate, saying, that having, as Amazons, shared the many perils of the Adventurers, they had a right to share their triumphs ! Argumentative Fig would have undertaken to reason them out of so unreasonable a view of their deserts, but Tuflongbo peremptorily forbade any discussion of his commands, and ordered the two gossips immediately to take what belonged to them, and to go about their business. Lobelia fixed a glare of angry defiance upon the Leader, but Aunt Spite, who knew him better, began to make her preparations, muttering as she did so, that she would make him repent sending her out of his camp before he was many days older. He paid no heed to her scoldings, but went away with Arum for a stroll down by the sweet Water-course,

whistling carelessly. Her former guards then helped her and also Lobelia to get ready, and saw them a little way on their journey with such civilities as rude Xanthium, angry Whin, fretful Valerian, and false Bugloss might be expected to show to persons they disliked, and who had given them a world of trouble and anxiety. On the whole, perhaps, it was a relief when their escort left them to proceed alone.

When Tufsongbo and the ardent Arum returned from their quiet walk, they passed the spot where poor Waste, sister to Frail and Clutch, had been fallen upon and devoured by the beasts of the Forest. The grass did not grow there, nor any flowers, and the sunshine always passed it by as a haunted place. The two Adventurers regarded its desolation sorrowfully, and went on their road, saying, they would not have such a heart in their bosom as that of Mistress Clutch for the dignity of the whole body! On reaching the garden, under the high walls of which the band had bivouacked, the Leader perceived that some of his people were conferring with an ugly old Fairy who was godmother to the owner, on the ways and means of growing rich; while others had clambered up by a wild vine-branch, and were looking down from the top of the wall on what was passing in the Enclosed Garden. The spectacle, however, seemed but little attractive; for nobody stayed long, and several would not take the trouble to go up—Clutch was there, they said, walking about as usual, looking intensely gloomy, and endeavouring in vain to solace her loneliness by counting up her possessions, none of which she had yet found spirit enough to give away. The wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with Many Tendrils was with her, but no one else; and a more dreary life

than that she had led, since the Act of Amnesty was passed by which Aunt Spite and her accomplices were restored to freedom, it is impossible to conceive.

Tuflongbo tried to put it in her way to do a kind action by mentioning that his people, being thirsty, would much enjoy a little fresh fruit for supper; but though she eyed the heavily-laden boughs of her garden for a few moments, as if she were about to be generous and grant them some, she, at last, turned sharply away from the trees, saying,—“No, I cannot spare any—besides, why should I lavish my substance on those who are not akin to me? It is all my own!”

“And what is it worth?” cried a mocking voice on the farther side of the wall.

“Nothing; but it is all my own!” replied Clutch; and she resumed her weary tramp, while her heart in her bosom felt cold as any stone.

Tuflongbo left her, feeling full of pity and concern; he said he thought her greed one of the most lamentable scenes he had ever witnessed in the whole course of his long experience. And as Clutch refused them fruit, his people supped without, slept like the tired adventurers they were, and the next morning went on their way rejoicing.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE FAMOUS PETITION IN FAVOUR OF LITTLE IDLE.

TUFLONGBO and his troop had advanced about half the distance between the Enclosed Garden where the Sun never Shines, and the Enchanted Bower, when they be-



The Deputation to Tufongbo.

1111

1111

1111

1111

1111

1111

1111

1111

came aware of a pleasant bustle and hum of little tongues, and trilling laughter coming towards them ; and at a bend in the road they arrived full in view of a great crowd of youthful Fairies, marching in more or less disorder, with the Boy from the Country under the Sun, who had been sent to Sheneland on a second visit to Professor Holiday, at the head of them. A rosy, roly-poly little girl, his sister, trotted beside him, blowing out her plump cheeks with great energy as she sounded a blast through a penny trumpet, to reduce their tumultuous followers to the demure discretion befitting the solemn embassy they had undertaken. At the warning note, all the merry stragglers who were nutting, black-berrying, bird-nesting, butterfly-hunting, or otherwise diverting themselves in an irregular manner, threw away their gleanings, dropped into line, straightened their little laughing faces, and looked as grave as mustard-pots.

Tuflongbo lifted Content on his shoulder and showed him the pretty sight ; and there the child remained, listening attentively throughout the important conference that now took place between the great Traveller and the young Fairies.

It appeared that much dissatisfaction had been occasioned in all the nurseries of Sheneland by the consignment of poor little Idle to the severe tuition of Mistress Snip, the respectable wife of Professor Birch, after her deliverance out of the bonds of the wicked Fairy of the Creeping Plant with Many Tendrils ; and the object of the present deputation was to entreat Tuflongbo to receive her into his service, and make her comfortable in her own lazy way. The Boy from the Country under the Sun had been elected spokesman by general con-

sent of his tiny friends ; his sister being chosen to substantiate the views expressed in the petition, which had been carefully composed and copied out in round text, by the best writers at Professor Jolly's Royal Foundation School about a month before, that it might be in readiness when the intelligence arrived at Elfin Court that Tuflongbo was on his return.

As they met, the Boy from the Country under the Sun, who had there acquired the *sobriquet* of the "Young Observer," looked the famous Traveller frankly in the face, pronounced him inwardly a thorough good fellow, and presented the petition with an appropriate speech. Tuflongbo received it with pleasant dignity ; and while the two bands stood opposite, watching and admiring each other, he read the document aloud.

This was what it said,—

"Dear Tuflongbo,—We want to ask you something very particular, and we hope you will grant it. We are your humble petitioners, and all that, but we do not know lawyer's figures of speech yet, and Jolly says—he's our master, and we like him—we had better put it into our own words that we understand. Cab, who is bottom but one of the lowest form, wanted it done in Latin, as more respectful ; but we could not be sure of our grammar, so we have followed Jolly's advice. And this is what we want to say.

"We had a companion once, whose name was little Idle ; she was not very good, but that does not matter ; naughty girls will mend again, as Roly-Poly says. She was maid to Old Woman who lives in the Ash-tree, and makes Court dresses for the Queen ; and one night when she was sent out to gather silver rays and silk of flowers, she lay down and fell asleep under the Creeping

Plant of Many Tendrils. The wicked Fairy to whom it belongs caught her, and made her fast, hand and foot. And she underwent terrible persecutions at his hands. He pelted her with slugs, he sent fat toads and slimy worms to crawl over her, and lively frogs to leap upon her face ; and she had nothing good to eat except once you gave her a spoonful of golden honey and half a fruit of Alepivi ; but as soon as you were out of sight the greedy wicked Fairy came down and ate the Alepivi before her eyes, mortifying her feelings by telling her at every bite how *luche-de-plaw* it was.

“ Well, that went on until the festivities at Court to celebrate the marriage of Prince Glee and Princess Trill ; when the Queen took pity on her and commanded her to be set free ; for having given valuable information to yourself and the Prince when you went to Wildwaste to deliver the Princess out of the hands of the Giants. But having a bad character—worse than she deserved, we all think—she was transferred to the service of Mistress Snip, wife of Professor Birch, who leads her such a life that it is quite a burden to her. Mistress Snip’s temper is a perpetual scourge ; she never lets poor little Idle sleep in the daytime, though a nap after every meal is requisite for her constitution ; and she works her so hard that you can almost see where her bones are, which was formerly very far from being the case.

“ This petition, therefore, dear Tuflongbo, is to beg you to interfere and see justice done. After all, what is her crime ? Don’t we all sympathise in her feelings more or less ? One of the most polished nations of the Country under the Sun has a beautiful proverb expressive of the sweetness of doing nothing—*Dolce far niente*, it is ; and very good people who love to drowse and bask

in the warmth at noon, quote it every day as a familiar household word ; our mothers and nurses also declare that the only time they can rely on our being safe and out of mischief is when we are asleep. Can then what is so praiseworthy in us be in her a crime deserving of the continual restraint to which she is subjected ? It is not that she has ever been a very popular favourite with us that we now plead her cause, but because our instinctive sense of justice revolts against the severity of her disproportioned punishment. You would not like it yourself, Tuflongbo,—you know you would not. You incline to an active life ; you are a famous Traveller ; no corner of Sheneland so remote but the name of the great Tuflongbo is known there. Suppose you were commanded by Queen Osmunda to stay at Court ; to go through the slow routine of all the public ceremonies ; to spend two-thirds of your life half asleep, and the rest only half awake. You would not survive it a month. And as activity agrees best with you, so does laziness agree best with our little friend Idle ; and the sum and substance of our wishes is, that she should be allowed to cultivate her native qualities with as much wholesome slumber as they require to raise them to perfection ; and if she may do it in your service, we shall be all the more assured of her comfort and well-being. And that is the end of what we have to say." Then followed the signatures of the Boy from the Country under the Sun, of his sister Roly-Poly, and of more than a thousand youthful fairies, all personally represented in the large multitude that had come out to meet Tuflongbo.

"I like your petition very much, and I will try what I can do for your little friend," said the Traveller kindly, when he had finished reading the names, and had handed

the document to Phlox to take care of with his other important state papers.

“Will you take her into your house and make her your little maid, Tuflongbo?” asked Roly-Poly, emboldened by the Leader’s gentle ways.

“That I cannot promise you, my pretty mouse,” replied Tuflongbo, patting her rosy cheeks. “I am so often on the wing that I do not keep up any establishment; but I know a drowsy fair Elf called White Poppy, who will receive her on my recommendation, and make her comfortable to her heart’s content. She will feed her well, and clothe her warmly, and let her sleep the clock round every day if she feels disposed, until at last she will grow too fat to see out of her eyes!”

“And that is just what little Idle will like,” cried all the youthful Fairies in chorus. “Thank you, Tuflongbo, and good-bye.”

Then away they all flew to tell her, and to have a fine game in the Forest to celebrate her happy deliverance. But the Boy from the Country under the Sun was left behind with his sister; so Tuflongbo, who approved of their open countenances, set little Content down between them and told them to make friends; and he would carry them all three to Court, to witness the triumph of his return from the great Journey through the Enchanted Forest of Stone. Then the children took hold of each other’s hands and trotted along together very happily, while the generous Traveller and his band of Adventurers marched close behind.

CHAPTER LXXII.

"RISE UP, SIR TUFLONGBO!"

THAT night they bivouacked by the Enchanted Bower, and while Fennel and Orphry were serving out the rations for supper, up came little Maid Brisk to gather wild white roses with the dew upon them, for her mistress, Old Woman, who lived in the Hollow of the Ash-tree, to make Court dresses of. She was very quick and cheerful, and being brought into the presence of Tuflongbo, and bidden to tell what was the last news from Sheneland, she replied,—

"Yesterday the Black Bat flew over here on his way from the Balmy Isles, where he had been to tell the Princess Myrrh and her father King Cloves that the grave of the chivalrous Daffodil and the sensitive Mimosa was grown green. He went forward with his intelligence to Queen Osmunda; and so, now that the days of mourning are over, I am sent out to gather wild white roses with the diamond dew on them to make new robes for her Majesty and the Maids of Honour."

"Have Aunt Spite and Lobelia arrived at Court yet?" inquired Bugloss, with an appearance of anxious interest.

"I have not heard a word about them; but I hope not," replied little Maid Brisk, promptly.

"And why do you hope not, my pretty damsel?" said Tuflongbo.

"Because I never knew them come but they brought a long train of mischiefs behind them. I cannot stop

to talk now, however, so good-night to you, and pleasant dreams! I have my silk of flowers to gather; but to-morrow I shall be standing in the doorway of the Hollow Ash-tree to watch your fine procession pass. Oh, Tuflongbo, but it won't be so gay or grand as when Daffodil's yellow flag flew out on the wind and led the way! How we wept when we heard that he was dead! He was so noble, so brave and good!" And with these words and tears in her eyes, little Maid Brisk sped away and gathered her night's supply of wild white roses with the dew on them. And it touched the ardent Arum to the core of his heart to see how his beloved brother-in-arms was regretted and admired; but it consoled him again to remember that his grave was green already; for in Sheneland, it is only over the pure and valiant that the grass and flowers will grow. Where the wicked Fairies are buried the spot is a scorched desolation, to which sun and sweet air never come.

The next morning, the band of gay Adventurers started on the last stage of their homeward march in a most happy state of excitement; singing, laughing, talking like twenty times the number they were. Little Content, too, rejoiced that the period of his separation from his father and mother was lessening at every step; but not to be ungrateful for his protector's kindness, he made himself very good company to the little Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun, and gave them several entertaining accounts of what he had seen while travelling with Tuflongbo.

And thus, with the laurel-flags fluttering victoriously, the gallant troop came in sight of the dwelling of Old Woman in the Hollow Trunk of the Ash-tree; and

there was Old Woman herself, looking out to give them a greeting, and little Maid Brisk on the watch, as she had promised to be. And directly they had passed this familiar spot, they heard the blast of the golden reeds, and Queen Osmunda's three score and five trumpeters, with the twelve banner-bearers, bearing their banners of poppy-silk, appeared winding up the broad glade of the Forest to meet them. The Chief Herald, Grand Pomp, strutted stately at their head; and as he approached Tuflongbo and his victorious companions, he bowed low to the ground with his flap hat three times. Then the three score and five trumpeters and the twelve banner-bearers divided, and fell back in equal lines to either side of the road; and through the avenue thus formed, Her Gracious Majesty Queen Osmunda was seen advancing, attended by Prince Goldheart, with Mother Dignity, and the five and twenty Maids of Honour behind her, and Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, pointing the way.

Tuflongbo approached his Royal Mistress with his hand on his heart, and dropt on one knee before her; but she, with infinite grace and sweet dignity, immediately bestowed upon him the accolade, saying, in her voice of silver,—

“Rise up, Sir Tuflongbo! Knight of the Noble Order of Valour!”

At this all the Court cheered, until the Forest rang again, crying, “Hail, Sir Tuflongbo! Welcome, Sir Tuflongbo!” And then the royal trumpeters blew three blasts on their golden reeds, and the banner-bearers lowered their poppy banners thrice before the new Knight-Fairy, as the custom was, and then waved them over his head in a scarlet cloud.

•

The feelings of the gallant Tuflongbo almost overcame him, and he said to the Queen in a voice of deep emotion,—

“My beloved Sovereign and Mistress, this is the proudest day of my life.”

Then Prince Goldheart congratulated him and shook hands, and those of the Court who could not approach near enough for the flutter and fuss of the gossamer of the five and twenty Maids of Honour, nodded at him over each other's heads, and gave him every assurance that they were glad to see him safely at home again. Also her Majesty kindly acknowledged the services of the other Adventurers, distinguishing especially the ardent Arum, the warlike Yarrow, and astonished Betty. After this ceremony was concluded, the Grand Pomp closed up the ranks of the banner-bearers and trumpeters, and headed the Royal Procession on its return to the Palace; Sir Tuflongbo walking beside the Queen, who conversed with him delightfully; and the rest of the Adventurers mingling with the Court Pageant, and recognising all their friends and acquaintance with great glee and not a bit of pride.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE STATE RECEPTIONS AT ELFIN COURT.

HER MAJESTY had graciously issued her royal commands for a series of sumptuous entertainments in her Palace, to celebrate the triumphant return of Sir Tuflongbo and her other faithful soldiers and servants from

their terrible journey through the Enchanted Forest of Stone. The first was to take place that evening, as a state reception in the Grand Hall, illuminated with clustering chandeliers of Fire-flies; Queen Osmunda being seated on her Golden Throne, arrayed in her Royal Robes of Carnation, and wearing her crown of diamond dew-sparkles on her head.

At her right hand, on the Dais of Beauty, was Prince Goldheart; and at her left, the lovely Princess Myrrh, who had just arrived at Court as her favoured guest. King Cloves, Prince Glee, Princess Trill, Tricksy, Sweet Lips and Mother Dignity, the Mistress of the Robes, were grouped immediately behind the Throne; while the five and twenty Maids of Honour, all clad alike in white lily bells, and the five and twenty Royal Pages in blue jerkins and scarlet stockings, filled up the space at the back of the Dais.

The Knights-Fairy of former creations kept the way to the Throne, wearing the robes and collars of their respective orders; Grand Pomp and Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, being stationed at the foot of the steps to present each Adventurer to her Majesty in his turn. The Royal Society of Wiseacres occupied their customary place, and a large gallery was set apart for the accommodation of the juvenile Fairies; three reserved seats in the centre of the front row being kept for little Content and for the Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun, and a feather bed in the corner for little Idle.

In other eligible and conspicuous positions were disposed Fancy, the Great Court Moralist and Story-Teller; Tippet and Wink, with his little wife Dot; Dump and Touchy; Frolic and Clipsome; Tippetty

Wichet and his brothers, with their pretty spouses, Posy, Dove, and Poppet ; also Trip and Blue-Bell, Try-for-it and Satin, Finick and Sleek, Turn and Sly, Twist and Flip, Lush and Arch, Trap and Dimple, who had all been married last year on the same occasion as Prince Glee and Princess Trill.

Professors Holiday, Prize, Treat, and Jolly, were present ; and so were Professors Birch, Cane, and Ferule, with their respective wives, Snip, Snap, and Snarl ; and Professor Twig, who, like Tippet, was still a bachelor. Besides these, there was a vast miscellaneous crowd of Elves and Fairies of more or less dignity and distinction, much too numerous to particularise, but which made the Grand Hall as gay as a tulip-bed in the sunshine.

All being thus arranged and settled in due order, the three score and five trumpeters blew a right royal blast, and immediately Sir Tuflongbo entered the Grand Hall, invested with the insignia of the noble Order of Valour, and marched up between the ranks of his brother knights to the foot of the Throne. There, kneeling before his Gracious Mistress, he presented to her his journals, maps, and sketch-books, containing full details of his marvellous adventures. Queen Osmunda accepted them and gave him her thanks ; after which the documents were handed over to the keeping of the Master of the Archives of Sheneland, and Sir Tuflongbo was invited to take his place on the Dais beside Prince Goldheart.

Then appeared Betony, gorgeously dressed, but with his mouth open and astonished almost out of his wits, the spoils of Rufnagumba, whom he had slain, being carried before him by Fennel, Juniper, Walnut, and Orphry. The Queen received him with a smile, and

down he dropt upon both knees in an agony of bewilderment at his most surprising honour and glory. There was a vast commotion and curiosity amongst the Elves of the Court to behold this redoubtable hero, who had destroyed the four-winged dragon single-handed; and if he could have heard the remarks passed on his fierce and valorous countenance by these pretty discriminators, it is probable he might not have survived the shock to his organs of wonder.

Tuflongbo then proceeded to recite dramatically the story of Rufnagumba's death, giving Betony his due meed of praise, but no more; and several of her Majesty's advisers, Prince Goldheart amongst the rest, counselled her that he had not merited the highest distinctions of knighthood, having really become great, not by desert, but by accident. Thereupon arose a question as to who was able to discern between the greatness of desert and the greatness of accident, which was decided by Queen Osmunda conferring on Betony the Serene Order of Complacency, instead of the Noble Order of Valour, for which he had hoped. But she added a pension to compensate for the disappointment, and he took his place on the Dais, one of the most astonished and loyal of her Majesty's subjects.

The spoils of Rufnagumba were piled up in glittering heaps below the steps, to be afterwards transferred to the Royal Armoury, and the Spoil-bearers, Fennel, Juniper, Walnut, and Orphry, received each a medal, inscribed with the scenes of their Strength, Help, Stratagem, and Skill, by Chisel, the most artistic engraver in Sheneland.

The ardent Arum was next introduced to the presence of the Court, and upon him Queen Osmunda looked

with a shining countenance. The glad-hearted Princess Myrrh blushed with a radiant delight as their eyes met, and when he bent a knee before the Throne, and her Majesty gave him the accolade, and said, "Rise up, Sir Arum, Knight of the Noble Order of Valour!" she thought him the bravest, beautifullest, truest, grandest, dearest, most glorious Knight-Fairy that ever was created, and when he took his place on the Dais beside *her*, while Sir Tuflongbo magnanimously attributed to him the chief honour of the Battle of the Giants and other mighty deeds, she felt herself the happiest of the happy in being his beloved and betrothed.

Yarrow then appeared and received the blazoned Sword of Glory. After him were presented Hawkweed, Hawthorn, Elder, Dodder, Dock, Borage, Box, Bearded Crepis, and Golden Rod, who had golden medals conferred upon them; then Mezereon and Phlox, bearing the apology of the rebellious King of the Turtle Rocks: they received the Grand Cross of Vanity; next Abecedary, Dandelion, Fig, and Lychnis, on whom was bestowed the Order of the Lotus; Xanthium, Whin, and Valerian were presented with the Silver Thistle; Bugloss received a brass token, lacquered; and the rank and file of the supernumeraries were endowed with the Bronze Arrow, the knighly cognisance of their Leader, Sir Tuf-longbo, a piece of money, and an invitation to a great open-air feast on the morrow, which was to succeed a magnificent tournament, where the Knights-Fairy would prove their prowess in arms against all challengers. Prince Polyanthus, at this point of the ceremonies, made his bow to the Throne as a subject returned from abroad, but nothing was said of his adventures. He was elegantly curled and scented, and his dress was of the

newest and most extravagant mode ; his airs and graces also were very conspicuous, and so obtrusively expressive of his feelings of superiority, that Tippet whispered him to take care and not lose his balance ; for he was evidently top-heavy with conceit. The treasures brought from the Turtle Isles were then presented to the Queen, and graciously accepted, which wound up the State Reception.

It had, however, been mentioned to her Majesty that the little son of her Head-Forester, Father Sorrel, had accompanied Sir Tuflongbo's Expedition throughout, and she was graciously pleased to inquire of the Leader if this statement were true. On being told that it was so, she desired to have the child brought before her ; and when little Content appeared with his pleased and pleasant face, she was so much charmed that she took him on her lap and kissed him, and said he was the most wonderful little traveller she had ever seen, and allowed him to look at her crown and sceptre, and all her other pretty things. Princess Myrrh also caressed him, and Mother Dignity folded him to her ample bosom, and called him a darling ; and Princess Trill and Sweetlips wished he were their little son ; and the Maids of Honour almost smothered him with kindness and gossamer. But Sir Tuflongbo rescued him from that capital punishment, and set him on his shoulder, where he remained during the rest of the evening ; going in to supper in that position, even where Sir Tuflongbo, as hero of the day, had the supreme honour of leading Queen Osmunda herself to the head of the table.

Little Content highly enjoyed his distinction, but he could not help casting wistful glances at his companions, the Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun, who

were left up in the front of the gallery, until the Queen observed his young friends, and invited them to come down and share his amusement. So they came—the Young Observer and Roly-Poly too—and were treated as foreigners of importance, and encouraged to be extremely happy ; and at supper they received a good supply of puff-rasp, and cream-tart, and custard, and nectar, and ambrosia, and golden-honey, and fruit of Aplepivi, and everything else that was nice.

The evening wound up with a magnificent ball, at which also they were present, though from shyness they declined to dance. But they saw Queen Osmunda lead a stately measure with Sir Tuflongbo ; and they saw the exquisite Elfin-Court Maze Dance, which was poetry in motion. All the Elves at Court took part in it, Sir Arum and the glad-hearted Princess Myrrh dancing first, and nearly a thousand other pairs gliding into the maze by degrees. Amongst the most conspicuous beauties were the elegant Acacia and Yarrow, the persuasive Althea and Hawkweed, the proud Amaryllis and Prince Polyanthus, the fair Anemone and Hawthorn, the youthful Celandine and Dock, the sweet Clematis and Elder ; the frivolous Columbine and Jonquil, who was courting her ; the cheerful Coreopsis and light-heeled Larkspur, the diffident Cyclamen and Box, the blushing Marjoram and egotistical Narcissus, the candid Violet and sincere Fern, the faithful Veronica and constant Ivy, the devoted Heliotrope and Mezereon, the fickle Pimpernel and fashionable Rocket, the sensible Verbena and Fig, the amiable Jasmine and Whin, the thoughtful Pansy and Phlox, the mild Mallow and Valerian, the pretty Mignonette and Lychnis, the virtuous Mint and Dandelion, the busy Orchis and Xanthium, the tender

Myrtle and eloquent Lotus, the bright Daisy and Shamrock, the refined Snowdrop and Orphry, the lovely Primrose and Walnut, and others too many to mention. But the last year's bridegrooms, Prince Glee, Dump, Wink, Frolic, Tippetty-Wichet and his brothers, Trip, Try-for-it, Finick, Turn, Twist, Lush, and Trap, figured in with their brides, Princess Trill, Clipsome, Touchy, Dot, Posy, Dove, Poppet, Blue-bell, Satin, Sleek, Sly, Flip, Arch, and Dimple; Tricksy and Sweetlips too, though now almost sedate family folks, acquitted themselves with graceful agility; and the music was so inspiring, that even Mother Dignity was prevailed upon by old Tippet to take a little hop; but they were so slow that twenty pairs trod on their toes in a minute, and they retired hobbling to the side seats, and talked over the days when they were as young, as sprightly, and as clever on their feet as any fairy in the maze. Betony, too, was induced by the poetical Eglantine, who was a thorough hero-worshipper at heart, to enter the dance with her; but the disdainful Rue was seen to laugh at his confusion and bewilderment amongst its intricate evolutions; and so he left his fair partner to finish her steps with Foxglove, who gladly took his place. Queen Osmunda, seated on her golden Throne, with the three children, Sir Tuffongbo, Prince Goldheart, and King Cloves grouped around her, watched the maze dance, which was only performed on the most dignified state occasions, with the liveliest delight; and not until the chandeliers of clustered fire-flies began to burn dim in the rising morning did it seem to occur to any one that it was time to close the festivities. But as one twinkling light went out after another, Muffin, Master of the Ceremonies, clapped his fat hands thrice. The

Queen took leave of Sir Tuflongbo and her other guests, and retired with her Court from the Ball. Then the general company also dispersed.

Sir Tuflongbo took little Content under his own charge again, and consigned the Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun to the care of Professor Holiday, at whose agreeable residence they were staying on a visit. The last person to leave was little Idle, who had fallen asleep on her feather-bed in the corner of the gallery at the beginning of the entertainment; she had snored vigorously all through it, and now had to be roused up by one of the ushers; and being awakened suddenly she was cross, but he handed her over to her new mistress, White Poppy, who had also been drowsing amongst the most elderly and serious Fairies ever since supper. Poppy took her little maid very kindly in charge, and lulled her straightway into another long dream. And that is the last that will be heard of little Idle for the present, for she slept like one of the famous seven sleepers, and never awoke any more until the grand entertainments were all over.

Before little Content went to rest, kind Sir Tuflongbo showed him the magic crystal, and bade him look into it carefully; and he rubbed his eyes and looked, and saw his mother setting her house in order, as if she were shortly expecting some one she loved, and though she was alone, her face had a brighter expression than it had ever worn since her little son was scowled away. Father Sorrel was training the wild clematis over the roof again, and pruning the bushes, and there were no traces left of Fairy Nettle amongst the stones by the cottage door.

“They are expecting me at home, dear Tuflongbo!” cried the child, joyfully. “Oh, when shall I set out?”

"In four days' time, my little man; then the rejoicings at Court over our triumphant return will be concluded, and your father and mother will be ready to greet you," replied the great Traveller, kindly.

"And we shall live together again more happily than ever," said little Content.

"More happily than ever," echoed Sir Tuflongbo. "They have found out that in labour and poverty they can have no pleasure so great and lasting as the presence of their little Content. Now sleep, my little man, that you may be bright and gay in the morning."

And thus bidden, the child dropt his fair head on his arm, and slept without waking, until the Knights-Fairy marched past Sir Tuflongbo's bachelor chambers at dawn, with banners flying and trumpets sounding, on their way to the Field of the Fire-tipped Silver Cloth of Daisies, where the grand tournament was to be held. Then up he sprang, and bathed and dressed, and was quite ready to set out with Sir Tuflongbo when the hour arrived for them to fall in and join the Queen's Procession from the Palace.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE GRAND TOURNAMENT AND FEAST.

A SUMPTUOUS tent, decorated with flags, had been prepared upon the field for Queen Osmunda and the Court; and around her were grouped all the beauty and grace of Sheneland; Princess Myrrh being on her right hand, and Princess Trill on her left. Little Content and the Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun were allowed

to sit at her Majesty's feet, and to see everything, and to talk when they liked.

The lists for the passage of arms were ready, and the Knights-Fairy stood in firm rank, awaiting whatever challengers might present themselves; Sir Tuflongbo and Sir Arum, as the knights of most recent creation, taking the lead. Sir Tuflongbo wore the Queen's colours of blue and silver; but Sir Arum, in the presence of his betrothed, had a pure white scarf of hers round his left arm, and a rosebud in his cap, which she had given him; and many deeds of valour his heart throbbed to do before her sweet and lovely eyes. King Cloves, Prince Goldheart, Prince Glee, Prince Polyanthus, Betony, Yarrow, and other persons of high distinction, were also waiting, fully equipped, to pick up any gauntlet that might be thrown down to them, and to give an account of it before their royal mistress, who, at the proper moment, waved her signal that the tournament might begin.

Immediately the twelve banner-bearers raised their banners of poppy-silk, and the three score and five trumpeters blew three echoing blasts of defiance on their golden reeds. Every Knight-Fairy's heart beat loud and fast, and there was a vaporous fuss and flutter amongst the gossamer of the Maids of Honour as the shrill notes died away; for at the last faint sound there rushed into the arena a dazzling shape, all clad in scale armour, his vizor closed and his lance in rest.

The warders threw wide the gates, and let him pass, and as he entered the lists, he flung down his glove, crying stentoriously,—“Here challenge I Betony the Astonished to a mortal combat, in revenge for the death of my father, the mighty Rufnagumba, whom he slew.”

Then all the Knights-Fairy cheered, and the three score and five trumpeters blew another blast ; and Betony, armed with a javelin, and pleading in vain an injury to his thumb, that he might escape the quarrel, was gently hustled towards the lists by Prince Glee, who encouraged him with fifty predictions of glorious victory and new honours to go in and do his best. Thus urged, he confronted the foe, but it was with fear and trembling ; and as Rufnagumba's dreadful son snapped his portcullis jaws in his face, he sank on his knees, dropt his javelin, held up his hands and his bad thumb imploringly, and said,—

“Ferocious and vindictive sir, it was by accident I killed your lamented father, indeed it was.”

“Recreant coward !” shouted the Knights-Fairy as with one voice, and immediately twenty of them, with Sir Tuflongbo and Sir Arum the first, sprang into the lists, flung Betony over amongst the gossamer, and defied the young Dragon to his nose.

“Fight me !” cried Sir Tuflongbo.

“Fight me !” cried Sir Arum, and so cried all the rest, feeling with rage that Betony had imperilled their honour before assembled Sheneland, and in the eyes of Queen Osmunda and her lovely Court.

“Grimgolphin accepts your defiance !” answered the son of Rufnagumba, haughtily. “Come on, Sir Tuflongbo ! come on, Sir Arum ! Knights of the Noble Order of Valour, and bite the dust before me !”

Thus speaking, he shook his lance in the air and dashed furiously forward ; but Sir Tuflongbo and Sir Arum sprang aside, and meeting no resistance to his blind onset, the consequence was that he pitched on his head, and executed an awkward somersault which almost

dislocated his neck. Recovering himself with difficulty, he again stood on his webbed feet, blushing even through his scale armour at the mischievous trills of laughter which pealed from the cloud of gossamer in the royal tent.

“Now, Grimgolphin, perhaps you will fight like a gentleman and not like a mad Taurus,” said Sir Tuflongbo, coolly. “One of us is enough for you, I perceive, and therefore, as the ardent Sir Arum is desirous to cover himself with glory in the presence of his betrothed, I resign to him the honourable duty of taking the shine out of your resplendent armour, and presenting you in the capacity of a lapdog at her pretty feet.”

Grimgolphin howled with rage at this contemptuous address, but he put his lance in rest, and prepared to act more warily in his next attack. Sir Arum also made ready: taking his shield on his left arm to defend his breast, and his sword in his right hand, he gave one tender look towards the glad-hearted Princess Myrrh, and springing towards his foe, he smote him on his cheek. Then did Grimgolphin roar and grin again, and dance a barbarous war dance round the lists, endeavouring to prick Sir Arum with his lance, but only blunting its point against his burnished shield. Loud were the cheers from the enthusiastic Knights-Fairy; Sir Tuf-longbo in his excitement jumped about, and clapped, and stamped, and whirled round, and shouted, “Well done, Sir Arum! well done! bravely done!! gallantly done!!!” until he was hoarse as a raven, and from the royal tent there rose a chorus of silvery triumph in which the valiant Sir Arum recognised the pleasant voice of his betrothed, and of Queen Osmunda herself.

Small was then Grimgolphin's chance of victory.

Dim and more dim became his scales, as he felt himself hardly pressed by his adversary ; short and shorter grew his breath, as he drove, and leaped, and charged in the arena. His panting was as the roar of a forge, and his puffing as the blast of a bellows.

“Will you yield and beg your life, proud son of Rufnagumba ?” cried Sir Arum, pinning him to the earth at last just opposite the royal tent.

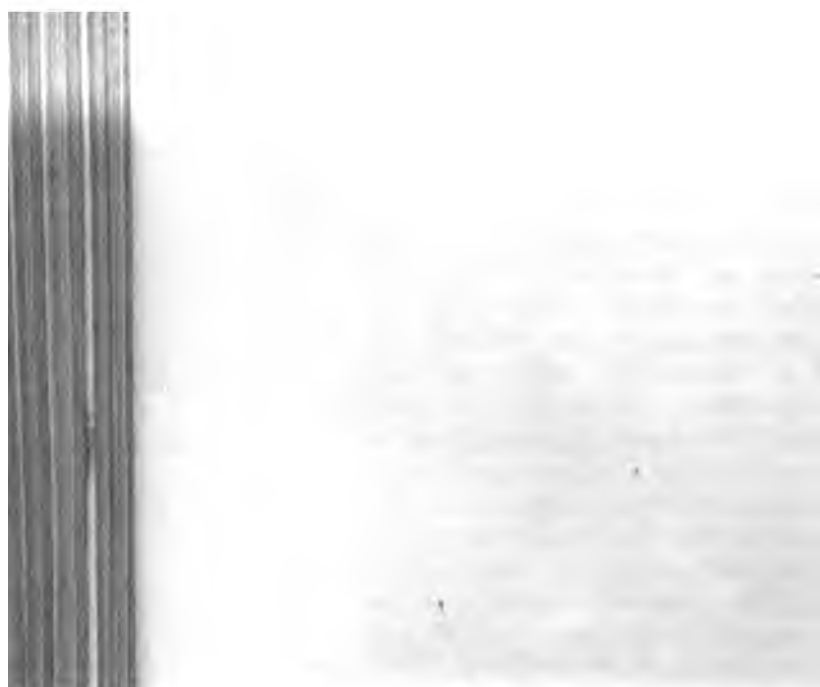
“No,” howled Grimgolphin, making a desperate plunge at the gallant Knight-Fairy, which took him unawares, and almost flung him to the dust ; but Sir Arum rallied instantly, and sprang again on his foe, wounding him in the shoulder and the neck.

Then began the mighty tug of battle. Each felt that the strife must be mortal for one or both, and while they wrestled, struggled, struck, stamp, and shouted loud defiance, the cheering amongst the Knight's companions became deafening. The dust of the arena hid the combatants sometimes from the eyes of the spectators, so furious was the fight, and the deepest anxiety for the result began to fill the bosom of Queen Osmunda and the Princess Myrrh. But at last the din of war ceased, and Sir Arum issued from the cloud weary but victorious, with the broken lance of Rufnagumba's son, which he had wrested out of his dead hand, poised aloft. He approached the royal tent all soiled and wounded as he was, and laid down the trophy at the feet of Queen Osmunda and his betrothed ; while Fennel, Juniper, and their assistants sprang into the lists and dragged out the body of Grimgolphin by the heels, to be stripped of his armour and buried with the honours of war ; for if a barbarous and wicked enemy, and the heir of a cruel race, he had died like a hero, and his foes respected him.



5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100

101





THE GRAND TOURNAMENT AND FEAST. 443

After this the twelve banner-bearers again waved their scarlet banners in the air, and the three score and five trumpeters blew another blast on their golden reeds. A pause ensued, and it seemed for a little while as if the loud defiance would not provoke a challenge, but just as the spirits, both of Knights-Fairy and spectators, were on the point of giving way, they received a startling shock, and the Chief of the Electrical Serpentes of Marshollos bounded into the arena.

The Maids of Honour, led by Mother Dignity, shrieked aloud at the sight of his form and countenance, and were chilled to the bone by the sensation of his hideous presence. Queen Osmunda, however, sat firmly and resolutely on her throne, and the Princesses imitated her dignified example in great tremor; and if they both closed their eyes to exclude the offensive spectacle presented by the new foe, it was but Elfin-like and graceful, and what a due sense of propriety, combined with exquisite delicacy of nerve, suggested.

When the Chief of the Serpentes, whose style and title was Gymnotus the Ancient, rose from his coils in the centre of the lists, and lifted his hooded head to peer round at the assemblage, every Knight-Fairy—Sir Tuf-longbo and Sir Arum included—shivered more or less, and each prayed that the gauntlet of this enemy might be flung down to anybody but him. Those who had experienced the power of the Electrical Serpentes in their own country of Marshollos, were disinclined to repeat the trial; and those who had been lucky enough to escape at that time had received such an exaggerated account of the shocks from those who had felt them, that they were far from anxious to add Gymnotus the Ancient to the circle of their personal acquaintance. It

was beneath them, however, to betray any dread of the challenge they had provoked ; therefore, they stood steady in their lines, with their arms presented, and eyed the enemy undauntedly.

Gymnotus the Ancient traversed the whole body with his dull eye twice or thrice, looking puzzled and irresolute ; but when he turned towards the group of Princes, and caught sight of the white feather which the proud Prince Polyanthus wore in his cap, a gleam of greedy satisfaction illuminated his visage, and slowly uncoiling all his rings, and mounting aloft until he could overlook the whole Field of the Fire-tipped Cloth of Daisies, he exclaimed,—

“ Prince Polyanthus, stand forth and show yourself ! I, Gymnotus the Ancient, dare you to finish the game at football, from which you fled when victory was declaring itself against you in my country of Marshollos.”

But Prince Polyanthus turned proudly on his heel and refused to accept the defiance, saying that the challenger was of a mean race and unworthy to enter into a contest with him who was born of the best blood in Sheneland. At this evasion some of the Knights-Fairy were heard to murmur that if Prince Polyanthus had really the best blood of Sheneland in his veins, he ought to be prepared to shed it for his country's glory and his own honour ; but he still remained unready, and perceiving that, their low murmurs swelled into loud taunts, and he was told that boiled *milk* was the circulating medium of his existence, and by no means patrician *blood* ; that he was lily-livered and wore the true coward's cognisance, of the white feather, in his cap !

These sneers brought the red into his face, and his

silken fingers clenched and unclenched themselves with rage ; while the proud Amaryllis, whom he adored, turned from him with a pout of scorn, and was heard to vow that never would she mate herself with one who hid himself behind a phantom dignity from the dangers which humbler persons met and overcame. Gymnotus the Ancient patiently waited while Prince Polyanthus tried to reconsider his refusal of the challenge ; but seeing, at length, that of his own unaided will he would never come to the point, he began to execute in the arena a pantomimic series of evolutions, perfectly harmless, but expressive, in the highest degree, of the contempt in which he held him, his high blood, his princedom, his curls, his scents, his smart clothes, and his excuses.

Queen Osmunda's countenance had been gradually growing more and more stern as she witnessed the base conduct of Prince Polyanthus and the mocking insults of Gymnotus the Ancient, and at last she said, sovereignly,—

“ Prince Polyanthus, you are no longer of my Court ! You are exiled to your country seat from this time forth, and forbidden to appear in my presence again, until, by some deed of conspicuous valour, you have wiped away from your name the terrible stain of dishonour that has fallen upon it to-day. Go ! ”

And Amaryllis would not vouchsafe him a glance as he departed. But Gymnotus the Ancient bounded out of the arena after him, and, as both disappeared together with the rapidity of a flash of lightning, it was conjectured that the Chief of the Electric Serpentes had expedited the retirement of the unworthy Prince into the country in his own cheerful galvanic way, by a series

of violent shocks. But no one, not even Amaryllis, took the trouble to inquire.

The Knights-Fairy then filed past the Royal Tent, and went through all their warlike manœuvres and a mock fight; then Sir Tuflongbo and Sir Arum broke a lance in sport, and the Queen was about to declare the Tournament at an end, when a shrill bagpipe skreel, softened by distance, floated down the wind to the Field of the Fire-tipped Cloth of Daisies and made her pause and hesitate.

“The Gryllas!” proclaimed the Royal Heralds.

“The Gryllas!” cried the Warders, throwing open the lists; and immediately an answering blast was hurled by the three score and five trumpeters from their golden reeds, and replied to again by the shrill bagpipe skreel.

Every Knight-Fairy then began looking to the brightness of his arms, that he might be prepared to do his best in earnest against the advancing foe—a foe more potent and more dreaded than any other that had ever challenged them to a fight before the Court.

A heavy, irregular trampling, that made the earth shake, and piercing cries, accompanied by a monotonous beating of drums, which caused the air to tremble, announced the gradual approach of the enemy. Sir Tuflongbo and Sir Arum having been called upon to take the command of their brother Knights-Fairy, now drew them up in two double columns and placed themselves in front to await the coming attack; while Queen Osmunda, Princess Myrrh, Princess Trill, Mother Dignity, and all the Maids of Honour leant forward in breathless anxiety to catch the first glance of the terrible Gryllas.

Very hideous indeed were they to behold when they

did come in sight ; but their own feelings of bewilderment at the beauty, grace, and sumptuousness of the Royal Group, prevented them from carrying out, as impetuously as they had designed, their plan of attack ; and they all stood open-mouthed, like the astonished Betony himself, staring at Queen Osmunda and the Princesses as if they were struck dumb. The bagpipe skreel finished off with a quaver of delight ; the drummers paused with their drumsticks in mid-air, and the Chief Captain began to stroke himself down, to lick his lips, and to declare, in an earnest manner, that his intentions were entirely peaceful and honourable. At this surprising specimen of audacity, the Knights-Fairy felt their cheeks burn and their fingers tingle ; especially Sir Arum was indignant, and advancing a few rapid paces towards the Grylla Chief, he struck him with the flat of his sword and said,—

“ Captain, you did not come here to woo, but to fight. Are you ready ? we will not be mocked ! ”

Upon this the natural ferocity of the barbarous leader was rekindled ; he uttered a bagpipe skreel, he smote his breast, which resounded like a drum, and making a headlong rush, he attempted to clutch the ardent young Knight-Fairy in his grasp. But Sir Arum was agile as he was valorous ; and skilfully evading the onslaught, he held his sharp weapon pointed towards the Grylla Chief's heart, and dashing upon it in his rage, he was run through and fell dead at his assailant's feet.

The spectacle of their Captain in the dust filled his followers with an insane frenzy of rage, in which they flung themselves upon the weapons of the Knights-Fairy without fear and without discrimination. His fall completely demoralised them, and from the beginning

of the fight, it was an utter rout for the furious Gryllas. They would not beg for quarter, nor accept it when offered to them, and at last Queen Osmunda, mercifully to put a stop to the slaughter, commanded Grand Pomp to announce the Tournament ended. Both parties then reluctantly drew off; the Gryllas gathered up the bodies of their slain, and with one black look at Sir Arum and his brother Knights-Fairy, they marched back to their own country by the way they had come, uttering their shrill bagpipe skreel, and beating their hollow breasts as before.

The wounded amongst the Knights-Fairy, and there were many, then went to Dr Pille and his assistants to have their wounds dressed; and by the time that painful operation was over, the grand open-air Feast was ready, and everybody sat down as hungry as hunters. Sir Arum was the hero of the day, and he was joyously placed beside his glad-hearted Princess Myrrh, who said to him everything that was pretty and pleasant about his victorious behaviour. Sir Tuflongbo was near her Majesty, little Content being on one side of him, and the Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun directly opposite. The only sad and sorrowful face there was that of the proud and handsome Amaryllis, who was comparing the honour and glory achieved by the young and ardent Sir Arum with the disgrace of her own recreant lover, Prince Polyanthus.

When the Feast was over and the Court returned to the Palace, the bereaved Elf was taken compassion on by sweet Princess Trill, who saw her with tears in her eyes, and tenderly asked what was the matter.

"Oh," sobbed Amaryllis, "Prince Polyanthus has behaved so ill!"

Now the Princess Trill, good and kind as she was, could feel no sympathy with a coward, but she comforted the weeping Amaryllis with the hope that perhaps some day an opportunity might be given him of performing that conspicuous act of valour, which, as her Majesty had said, might clear the disgrace from his once stainless name. Amaryllis wiped her eyes and was cheered, she did not believe that the Prince was in everything a coward. He had declined the challenge of Gymnotus the Ancient, certainly, but he had once before in the solitudes of Marshollos experienced the shocks of the vindictive Chief of the Electrical Serpentes; and she added, with a blush, his refusal of the game probably arose more from the dread of a ridiculous humiliation in her presence than from any fear of death.

“If his life *only* were in question he would give it as gaily, as freely for our Royal Mistress, as would your own Prince Glee, or the ardent Sir Arum himself!” cried Amaryllis, her enthusiasm and affection for the banished Prince reviving, as she recalled his many virtues.

Princess Trill warmly declared herself convinced of this, and kissing her young Elfin friend with great tenderness, she dismissed her and rejoined the Queen, to whom she kindly communicated all that had passed. Then her Majesty, ever beneficently inclined, promised to make a chance for the exiled Prince to redeem his character, and before retiring to rest, she issued her commands to Grand Pomp to proclaim a great hunting and coursing match in the Forest on the morrow, when the whole Court would ride down by the way of Prince Polyanthus's country residence, in the vicinity of which every description of game abounded.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE ROYAL HUNT AND RESCUE.

THE following morning at peep of day, Whip, the Chief Huntsman, Worry, Captain of the Queen's Kennels, Dopple and all the Royal pack, were assembled before the Palace gates, impatiently awaiting the appearance of the numerous party that had been invited to accompany her Majesty into the Forest. Little Content and the Boy from the Country under the Sun were the first to come out to him; and they had a good long talk, and made the acquaintance of all the hounds, and learnt the names of the favourites in a very short space of time; and, Whip, the Chief Huntsman, was so much gratified by their aptitude, and their enthusiasm in his darling science of woodcraft, that he declared he would mount them both for the coursing match on the most gallant little steeds in Sheneland! And this he did, and put them forthwith through their paces; and they rode fearlessly and beautifully. But he detected a cloud on the face of the Young Observer, which went and came irresolutely, and asking him what it meant, the Boy replied, "I know Roly-Poly will want to go; and how are we to manage it? I am afraid I shall have to stay behind with her."

"Nay! that shall never be!" cried Whip, pleasantly. "I will put a soft pad in front of me, and there she can sit, her tiny trots of feet on my steed's neck; and she will see as much as any one, and be as safe as she is at this moment in her own little crib."

And so that difficulty was settled, and when the royal party began to gather, Sir Tuflongbo came down with Roly-Poly in his arms, and perched her upon the pad in front of Whip, where she sat like a little queen, and laughed, and sang, and rejoiced, and was exceedingly happy.

Queen Osmunda at length appeared, clad in her scarlet hunting-coat, and with waving plumes in her broad hat, under which she looked lovely ; the shadow over her face being peculiarly pleasant and effective. Princess Myrrh, Princess Trill, Sweetlips, Clipsome, Amaryllis, Mignonette, Myrtle, Pansy, Acacia, Althea, Anemone, Celandine, Clematis, Cyclamen, Sweet Marjoram, Violet, Veronica, Verbena, Heliotrope, Jasmin, Daisy, Snowdrop, Primrose, Dot, Posy, Dove, Poppet, Bluebell, Satin, Sleek, Arch, and Dimple also wore these drooping hats, with broad, sheltering, modest brims ; but the plainer-featured Elves, or those who were on the look-out for admiration, such as Prim, Prude, Demure, the forward Pink, Pimpernel, Sly, Flip, Columbine, whom Jonquil was courting ; Rue, Tamarinth, and other bold young things, had disfigured themselves by a ridiculous little pie-cap, that was of no use to shade the glare from their eyes ; her Majesty had expressed a sentiment against it as being equally ugly and unbecoming, but the wearers considered it attractive, and kept up the fashion ; so it was attractive in one sense, for it caused such wicked wits as Lychnis, Sardony, and Wild Sorrel to pay them many satirical attentions, and to indulge in not a few merry gibes at their expense. And so they were freckled, and tanned, and laughed at, and looked frights for much less than nothing ; but it was of no use to reason with them, as Tippet waspishly remarked,

“They would rather have worn a dough-nut on their heads than not have been conspicuous!”

King Cloves and Prince Goldheart rode one on either side of her Majesty; Prince Glee following with Sir Tuflongbo, Princess Trill with the proudly anxious Amaryllis, and the ardent Sir Arum with his glad-hearted betrothed. The other Knights-Fairy and the Royal Pages were permitted to choose each his favourite companion amongst the Maids of Honour and Court Beauties, and as no two admired the same elf, the arrangement was perfectly easy and harmonious.

It was still early in the day when the joyous troop set forth into the Forest, but the heat was glowing, and the shadow of the thick glades therefore was both grateful and pleasant. Whip wound his musical horn, and rode first, Roly-Poly sitting up on her pad before him; and little Content and the Young Observer kept close at his heels. It was some time before they started any kind of game, but at last Worry gave tongue, Dopppe chimed in, and the whole pack broke forth as tunefully as a peal of bells. Whip cheered his brave pack forward, and presently the dangerous Bruinus broke cover, and dashed away down a steep glade of the forest, with the hunt after him, fast and furious.

Queen Osmunda loved the sport, and rode with the foremost, fearless of danger as the boldest and bravest there; and as it was contrary to Court etiquette for any one to take precedence of her Majesty, it happened by and by that she was some distance ahead of her Court, and alone. Then was it that Sheneland was all but called on to mourn the loss of the most gracious, good and merciful of its long line of queens; for just as she was galloping down a steep passage of a narrow glade,





Polyanthus rescues the Queen.

an enraged Grylla, who had been lurking in the forest since the previous day, to avenge the humiliation and death of his captain, rushed out upon her, and stopped the way.

But Queen Osmunda had a courageous heart in her bosom, and instead of crying out in terror, she shortened her riding-whip to beat him off; that, however, could but have availed her for a moment with so fierce and powerful an enemy, had not succour come as suddenly as the attack, in the person of Prince Polyanthus.

He happened to be sauntering disconsolately in the woods about his country house, when he heard the approach of the royal hunt, and turning his steps in the direction of the sound, he arrived just at the moment the furious Grylla, insensible to her dignity, her sex, and her loveliness, was about to strangle the Queen in his hideous grasp. Prince Polyanthus caught the scowling ruffian by the throat, and dragged him from his innocent prey, pinioned his arms, and slew him with two blows of his sword.

By this time the Court, in wild terror and anxiety, had come up to the rescue; but Queen Osmunda, self-possessed under all circumstances, graciously reassured them of her safety, and, pointing to Prince Polyanthus, said,—

“Behold my deliverer! Approach, fair Amaryllis, and give him his reward!” and Amaryllis forgot her pride and anger of the day before, and cast herself joyfully into her lover’s arms. “Gloriously have you effaced the dishonour from your name, Prince Polyanthus,” added her Majesty, much moved; “return to Court, and be henceforth one of its most shining ornaments.”

The Prince, unable to speak, kissed her royal hand ; and then being seized on by his former friends, he was roughly congratulated, and questioned as to why he had behaved so ill the day before, in declining the challenge of Gymnotus the Ancient, Chief of the Electrical Serpentes of Marshollos ?

“Those who have felt his humiliating shocks ought not to have blamed me,” was the Prince’s reply. “No honour could be gained even in a victory over such a mean character ; the best and bravest suffer as much as the weak and timorous. By strategy, and not by valour, I escaped him yesterday when he pursued me ; and so must all escape whom he attacks. But acknowledge now, ye who sneered so loudly yesterday, that Prince Polyanthus, if he will not strive with a ragamuffin, can yet fight well, and strike home, dandy though he be !” and shaking his perfumed locks, he pointed proudly at the prostrate form of the Grylla whom he had slain.

“None more bravely,” said the Queen. “Prince Polyanthus, ride with Amaryllis at my right hand !”

And thus was the hunt resumed in greater gaiety and pleasure than before ; and it continued until evening, when Bruinus was killed after a tremendous run.

As that had been a very fatiguing and exciting day, there was only supper and a pantomime in the evening. The pantomime was arranged by Fancy, the Court moralist, from some hints furnished to him by Sir Tuf-longbo, and represented, for the amusement of the juvenile Fairies, certain incidents of the famous journey through the Enchanted Forest of Stone. The Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun were delighted with it.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE ARREST OF SIR TUFLONGBO.

AFTER the distinguished honour that had been paid to Sir Tuflongbo the previous evening, in the representation of his travels and adventures by the Court Mimes, most bewildering was the surprise and sorrow of his friends, when the first news they had in the morning was that Aunt Spite and Lobelia had arrived at the Palace, and that the gallant Leader of the Adventurers through the Enchanted Forest of Stone had been arrested for high treason, while sitting at breakfast with little Content and the Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun. Only one other person was with him at the time of the occurrence, and that was Sardony, who had been left behind by his companions in the Valley of Spectral Temptations; where he had fallen into shameful captivity to Belladonna, her mother Nightshade and Holly-herb, the enchanter. He had but just escaped, and had made his way back to Sheneland alone; and finding that his old captain was enjoying his well-deserved triumphs at Court, he called upon him; but looking so worn, haggard, sour and disappointed, that Sir Tuflongbo hardly knew him for his former companion. He gave him a cup of strong tea to refresh him, and they were quietly talking over affairs, when there came an imperative knock at the door, which little Content opened; and immediately there entered Catch and Keep, the royal jailers, with Locks and Keys, the governors of the State Prison.

The three children were affrighted, but Sir Tuflongbo

took it very calmly, and putting another lump of sugar in his cup, said, "Well, what now?"

"Sir Tuflongbo, Knight-Fairy of the most Noble Order of Valour, it is our sad and painful duty to arrest you in the name of her Majesty Queen Osmunda, on a charge of high treason, for which this is our warrant," replied Locks, with official formality, touching him on the shoulder, and offering a great leaf of lotus covered with small fine writing.

"You have had a taste of popular honour, and now you are going to have a taste of royal gratitude," said Sardony, with a bitter sneer. "It is the same in every age, all the universe over."

"A truce to moral sentiments now!" replied Sir Tuf-longbo. Then turning to the chief governor of the State Prison, he said firmly, but without any tincture of bravado, "I am ready, friend Locks, lead the way." And kissing his little guests, he bade them farewell, and consigned the Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun to Professor Holiday, and said that Mother Dignity and the Maids of Honour would take care of little Content, who wept most bitterly at the sight of his kind protector leaving him in such severe company.

There was no one astir at that early hour; and Sardony accompanied his fallen Leader across the courtyard, and endeavoured to buoy up his spirits with angry denunciations against his unknown accusers; but Sir Tuflongbo bore himself with dignity, and held his peace. At the frowning gates of his prison, Sardony was obliged to quit him, but he did so very reluctantly, and it was with a heavy heart that he watched him pass into the interior, and heard the ponderous gates close upon him.

Whisper and Rumour quickly circulated the disas-

trous intelligence of what had occurred, and the most astounding speculations as to the nature and degree of Sir Tuflongbo's guilt were set afloat. Those who knew him intimately were bewildered with surprise. The great Traveller had always been so openly devoted to his royal mistress that it had even been said he was a vowed bachelor for her sake; he sought no honours, but such as she readily conferred on him; he had extended her commerce to the remotest borders of Sheneland; he had introduced a thousand new and beautiful articles into common service; he had discovered that wonderful problem of the use to which the old moons are put, that had puzzled so many successive generations of philosophers and astronomers; he had enriched the museum with curiosities, the armoury with trophies, and the archives with most wonderful chronicles of his travels and adventures. He sought no emoluments, riches he despised, a knapsack and a walking-stick were his outfit; a bachelor's apartments his home during the brief intervals between his journeys: how then could a person of his simple character and habits have laid himself open to the capital charge of high treason? Tippet listened and shook his head.

"Sir Tuflongbo is a deep one," observed he, lugubriously; "I shall be surprised at nothing that may come out."

"Because you are an old muff!" retorted Lychnis. "If Sir Tuflongbo is a traitor, I'll eat his head."

"It is rumoured that he had a design to abolish royalty in Sheneland, and to found a republic under his own auspices," said Bugloss.

"Where did you come at your secret information?" inquired the Traveller's friends anxiously.

"I had it from the best authority, I assure you," answered the spy, with an air of regretful mystery; "and I am afraid the case is very complete."

"Fudge! I'll believe it when I hear it, not before," ejaculated Lychnis, in a high state of exasperation.

While the case of Sir Tuflongbo was being thus discussed out of doors, Queen Osmunda was holding a solemn council of State in her private apartments. Prince Goldheart, Prince Glee, and Prince Polyanthus had been summoned to it; also Longwits, her attorney-general, Greybeard, her most experienced judge, Shrewd, a penetrating lawyer, and Oldairs, the learned president of the Royal Society of Wiseacres.

There was a red spot on the Queen's cheek, and her fair brow was marked with a frown, while her eyes sparkled with unsuppressed anger. Each of the privy councillors bowed low to his royal mistress as he took his place at the board, and perceived with respectful awe that she was cross. As soon as all were seated, her Majesty looked at her grave servants, and asked in a voice that trembled with pathos and severity,—

"By whose orders is it that my faithful friend and subject, Sir Tuflongbo, was arrested this morning; and pray what is the frivolous charge against him?"

Prince Goldheart was silent, Prince Glee looked vexed, Prince Polyanthus stroked his moustache, and Longwits undertook to reply.

"Gracious madam, for the safety of your beloved kingdom of Sheneland, and your own royal person, was this harsh measure resorted to," said he, deliberately. "Ehem! From secret information that we received last night, we felt it our duty to crush a threat-

ening danger in the bud ; Sir Tuflongbo's late behaviour has laid him open to suspicion more than once, and the intelligence that was brought before me yesterday makes it clear that he has designs against your Majesty's government of the most subversive character. Ehem ! If we have been too zealous in this matter, pardon your humble servants ; it would have been too late for action had we waited until royalty was abolished in this realm, your throne upset, and Sir Tuflongbo traitorously presiding over a republic in your stead."

"Sir Tuflongbo a traitor ! Sir Tuflongbo upset my throne ! Are ye mad, my sagacious councillors ?" cried the Queen in rising wrath. "Know ye, one and all, that I would pledge my crown upon his honour, and that he whom *you* stigmatise as traitor, *I* count as the firmest prop of my throne."

Again Prince Goldheart was silent, Prince Glee was vexed, and Prince Polyanthus stroked his moustache ; Longwits twiddled his thumbs, but showed no other signs of discomfiture. Greybeard, the experienced judge, spoke next.

"Sir Tuflongbo's former conduct was admirably calculated to deserve your Majesty's confidence," he said with precision ; "but the fairy nature is inconsistent. Many honours have recently been accumulated upon the simple Traveller, and may have awakened a dormant ambition. Popularity is a fatal snare to all but the purest and strongest minds, and Sir Tuflongbo is not exempt from vanity. The charges brought against him are very important ; they are supported by many witnesses ; and justice requires that they should either be fully substantiated or triumphantly

disproved. We have, therefore, caused his person to be arrested, and his papers to be seized."

Queen Osmunda drooped her head upon her hand, and a tear rolled down her lovely cheek, as the respectable Greybeard concluded his address. The sight of her grief touched the solemn councillors to the quick.

"Grieve not, dear mistress," said Prince Goldheart; "I too would risk my coronet on Sir Tuflongbo's fidelity."

"Don't cry, cousin," said Prince Glee; "those old mischiefs, Aunt Spite and Lobelia, are at the bottom of it."

"And lying Bugloss," added Prince Polyanthus; "so never fret: Sir Tuflongbo will shine all the brighter for his persecution."

"For my part," observed Oldairs, President of the Royal Society of Wiscacres, who had been cogitating his speech with great care while the others talked, "I believe Sir Tuflongbo to be too much of a Munchausen ever to become a Machiavelli. He is of a highly romantic, credulous nature, self-opinionated, but inquiring, studious, and enterprising. Since he has cast aside his ostentatious mantle of peacocks' eyes, I have held a very high estimate of his character and his powers. The accusation laid against him stands on no basis that will bear investigation."

The Queen looked up at Oldairs complacently, but her countenance again fell when Shrewd added in his cold, clear, passionless voice,—

"That remains to be proved. At all events, Sir Tuflongbo will enjoy a strictly impartial trial."

Her Majesty, on this, rose and broke up the council,

and retired to her private apartments, where were Princess Myrrh, Princess Trill, Mother Dignity, and all the Maids of Honour, with poor little Content in the midst of them, talking over the infamous treatment of Sir Tuflongbo in the most indignant way.

"It is all stories, I'm sure!" said Mother Dignity, alluding to the charges of high treason. "A mere babe could take him in! Talk of him conspiring, indeed! talk of *me* conspiring! Stuff and nonsense!"

"Truly it is beyond belief," murmured Princess Trill; "I am sure Prince Glee does not credit a word against his dear old friend; neither can I, when I remember how he came, with my love, and rescued me out of the hands of the Giants of Wildwaste, after my wicked Aunt Spite had carried me thither."

"I will maintain his honour against all his accusers, for I know Sir Arum will!" cried Princess Myrrh. "Did he not send Daffodil and my fond betrothed to the deliverance of my sensitive sister Mimosa and myself, when we were beguiled to the cold barren hills and abandoned? And did he not follow also, led by the Black Bat, from the south, and fight a great battle for us? Sir Tuflongbo a traitor! Never, never!"

And all the Maids of Honour expressed similar sentiments; then said Queen Osmunda, with a smile,—

"I perceive that Sir Tuflongbo has a very powerful faction in the State; if he were a rebel indeed, he would never lack partisans!" Then she kindly took little Content upon her lap, and comforted him, and listened to his pretty prattle, and cheered him with a hope that his brave and kind protector would soon be set free again.

But, perhaps, the greatest sensation caused by the

sudden arrest of Sir Tuflongbo was felt amongst the juvenile Fairies, who all counted him as their best, wisest, and most indulgent friend. The Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun, who were breakfasting with the great Traveller, by special invitation, when Locks and Keys and Catch and Keep entered his apartment, went back to Professor Holiday's, boiling with indignation, and spread the disastrous intelligence through every section of the youthful community. Even little Idle was aroused by it, and awoke and cried herself to sleep again; and there was a great deputation sent to the Queen to ask that Sir Tuflongbo might be let out of prison immediately; and a tumultuous band of the most resolute planned a rescue of how they were to rush in and snatch him from the hands of the executioner, in case he should be condemned to death! And they would have done it, too, or perished in the attempt.

Meanwhile, the gallant Sir Tuflongbo sat by the barred window of his dungeon, looking sorrowfully out at the bit of blue sky, which was all he could see from its dreary height. It was a narrow stone cell, arched overhead, and very low and gloomy. A stone shelf served as bed, another stone shelf as table, a roughly-hewn piece of oak was his seat, and his food was dry bread and water.

"I've known the time when I should have been very thankful for even such poor fare as this!" said the brave-hearted philosopher, smiling, as he munched his crust.

And then there arose before his mind's eye visions of long thirsty tramps in the Enchanted Forest, of the disappointment about supper in Rufnagumba's den, and of the hungry night-journey through the dreadful Cavern

of Subterranean Cataracts. And so vividly did these scenes of liberty rise again in his memory that the bare walls of his cell were quite tapestried with them and hidden. But by and by they faded into indistinctness, and he felt himself no longer simple Tuflongbo following the lead of his will, nor triumphant Sir Tuflongbo reaping the glories and honours of his enterprises, but a persecuted, unfortunate Knight-Fairy, with the capital charge of high treason hanging over his head, and secluded from all that made life desirable.

And he became very sad and anxious. He knew in his heart that Queen Osmunda had nowhere subject or servant more devoted or more faithful than he; and whence had arisen the dreadful charges against him he was quite at a loss to conjecture. Whilst he was turning the matter over and over in his mind, the door of his cell opened, and to his extreme surprise the false spy Bugloss was admitted into his presence. He advanced in a half-crouching attitude, which he intended to be expressive of sympathy, but which Sir Tuflongbo supposed to indicate a sharp internal pain, and he inquired after his visitor's health with as much urbanity as if they were meeting in any other place.

"I am well in body, but I suffer in mind, Sir Tuflongbo," answered Bugloss, moving his head in a slow, canting way, peculiar to him. "I suffer in mind because of you, Sir Tuflongbo. Accept the assurance of my profound sympathy! Ah! what a sad, sad reverse of fortune do I behold!"

Strange to say, Sir Tuflongbo felt no sensation but one of tingling in the toe of his boot, which became the more severe the longer Bugloss talked, until a cooling application of it to expedite his retreat began to suggest

itself as the readiest mode of relief. The prisoner, however, restrained his inclinations, and the spy continued to express his sentiments.

"I am your sincere well-wisher, Sir Tuflongbo; I trust you believe *that?*" said he, unctuously; and then he waited for a word of acquiescence, which did not come; so he went on without it. "I have been talking your business over this morning with Lawyers Double and Twist, and they take a very hopeful view of it; I would have you retain them for your trial. Leave the case entirely in their hands, and they will find you plenty of good witnesses. I do not know their names; but I know they always have a lot at command, ready and willing to swear anything."

"Sir," said the noble prisoner, kicking his toe against the wall to obtain a momentary ease, "my counsel is retained already."

"May I respectfully beg to know his name?" asked Bugloss, grinning from ear to ear.

"He is no friend of *yours*—his name is stern-visaged *Truth*," replied Sir Tuflongbo, his wrath gradually rising higher and higher, and his toe getting worse.

"Then I'm *afraid*, I am *very* much *afraid*, it will go hard with you," groaned the spy, with a wicked leer in his eyes.

At that moment Keys reopened the cell door, and admonished Bugloss that he must leave the prisoner, his time being up. The visitor immediately turned to go, and as he presented his back to the Knight-Fairy the temptation grew overpowering; and lest the opportunity should never occur again, Sir Tuflongbo there and then gave him a tremendous kick, which quite relieved his

own toe, and brought the lying spy in violent concussion with the opposite wall.

"Serve you right," said Keys ; "you were always a mean sneaking fellow."

And Bugloss returned home with a much better reason for doubling himself up than he had enjoyed when he entered the cell of Sir Tuflongbo.

In the course of the day all the friends of the fallen Knight-Fairy presented themselves in his prison. Sir Arum came ardent in anger against his brave Leader's enemies now as ever he had been when they met in fair fight. And Yarrow came, and Walnut, and Prince Polyanthus, who said he knew Sir Tuflongbo despised him as a curled and scented dandy, but he would bear as strong a testimony for him as the plainest Fairy in his troop. And Prince Glee came and condoled with him, and sang him a song ; and Prince Goldheart, who expressed his own and Queen Osmunda's feelings in a way that went to the Traveller's heart ; and Tippet, who was lugubriously prophetic ; and Wink, who laughed the accusations to scorn. There came also a number of Wiseacres and conferred with him, and showed their honourable trust, notwithstanding past quarrels, and little Content, who would have stayed with him, but it was against the rules of the State Prison for any captive to have a companion in his cell. And when evening came Sir Tuflongbo was left alone in the cold and the gloom to prepare for his trial, which was to take place on the morrow.

But in the dead of the night Elf Transformation appeared before him with her great bag of disguises, and she offered to change him into a bird, that he might fly away through his prison bars and escape the persecutions of

his enemies. Sir Tuflongbo, however, resolutely shook his head, and declined her assistance.

"A secret flight would be an admission of guilt," said he, collectedly. "By that alone my life would be forfeit. Never again could I travel in the service of my Queen: my days must be passed as those of a hunted criminal who trembles at a footstep or the fall of a leaf. I have done nothing to deserve a fate so terrible; and rather would I die by the hand of Axe at once, than lay myself open to it. But I fear not that extremity: I will trust to my well-known character, to the justice of my country, and the clemency of my beloved Queen for a clear deliverance."

"That is well and honourably spoken, Sir Tuflongbo," replied Elf Transformation; and she also left him.

But by and by a light, as from a lamp, shone on the floor, and looking towards the door, Sir Tuflongbo perceived that Mannikin Hope had just entered.

"There is one here in captivity; I come to bid him be of good cheer," said the Mannikin. "Ah! Tuflongbo, is it you? This is not the first time we have met."

"By no means," replied the Knight-Fairy. "The last time I saw you was in a poor room of a home in the Country under the Sun, where a little light had been put out on earth to be rekindled in Heaven. And once before, when I was down in the Giant's well with Prince Glee and a Blackcap, I caught a glimpse of you.

"I thought we were old friends," said Mannikin Hope, "and I can thus speak to you the more readily. Stern-visaged Truth is wholly on your side, and it will be very strange to-morrow if he prevail not over such false adversaries as Bugloss, Lies, Fibs, Double, Twist, Aunt Spite, and Lobelia."

“If that is the list of my accusers I defy them,” cried Sir Tuflongbo.

“You have nobody else to fear,” replied Mannikin Hope. “You may lie down and rest in peace and good comfort.”

So the Knight-Fairy lay down on his hard stone bed and fell asleep, and it seemed in his dreams that Mannikin Hope sat by him singing,—

“Cheer up, Tuflongbo, cheer!
There is no danger here.
Truth and loyalty plead for thee,
All brave hearts keep faith in thee;
Cheer up, Tuflongbo, cheer!”

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE TRIAL OF SIR TUFLONGBO.

THE next morning, by the stir and bustle and running to and fro in the neighbourhood of the Hall of Justice, it was easily to be seen that some extraordinary trial was about to take place. Groups of interested idlers, enjoying the excitement of the occasion, hung about the steps and courtyard of the State Prison, where a strong guard was stationed to conduct the illustrious criminal from his cell to the bar of Justice. Within the great hall the ushers and halberdiers had enough to distract them in finding seats for the numerous Fairies of distinction who claimed to be present at this remarkable trial. All the Royal Society of Wiseacres were there, and every one of Sir Tuflongbo's companions on his journey through the Enchanted Forest of Stone; Sir Arum, Betony, Yarrow, Hawkweed, and

a few others being provided with places on the bench near Prince Goldheart, King Cloves, Prince Glee, and Prince Polyanthus. Tippet also was amongst them, still shaking his head as if it were a rattle with peas in it, and Wink, Lychnis, Sardony, and Dandelion. There were no Elves there, it being contrary to Court etiquette for them to enter the Hall of Justice unless called thither by inexorable duty. The possibility of finding *amusement* in the agonies of a culprit being tried for his life had not yet presented itself to the feminine hearts of Sheneland; and at the time their brothers, lovers, and husbands were rallying to the support of the accused, Queen Osmunda and the Princesses, Mother Dignity, and the Maids of Honour, with numerous friends, were anxiously waiting in their private apartments such shreds of intelligence as could be brought to them during the progress of the trial by little Content and the Young Observer, whom they had chosen as their telegraphic messengers. The hours were very, very long, and anxious indeed.

It was soon after nine o'clock that the judges' procession entered the Hall of Justice. Greybeard and Judge Grim were appointed to try Sir Tuflongbo: Longwits conducted the prosecution, and stern-visaged Truth defended the prisoner, who was brought in between Locks and Keys, and placed at the bar in the midst of a silence so profound that you might have heard a pin drop.

Sir Tuflongbo looked calm and collected, like a Fairy who has all his faculties about him, and a firm reliance on a good cause. His beard was as crisp and well-trimmed, his dress as neat, his step as ready, his eye as bright, as if he had been on his way to dine with the

Queen. Longwits, the Attorney-General, rose to address the Court, and read the bill of indictment, immediately the sensation of the prisoner's entrance subsided; and he was listened to with a breathless attention.

The charges against Sir Tuflongbo were arranged under the following ten principal heads:—

Firstly, that he had abandoned, in the most desolate regions of the Enchanted Forest, a considerable number of the royal forces; amongst whom were Bugloss, Betony, Fig, and others, leaving them to the mercy of fate, though his commission from the Queen required that he should not neglect their safety.

Secondly, that he had sent despatches to Sheneland in charge of Prince Polyanthus and Snap-Dragon, who quarrelled before their followers, to the subversion of all rightful discipline.

Thirdly, that he permitted and encouraged the ardent Arum and the chivalrous Daffodil to engage in a wild-goose chase, which drew on them an attack from the Giants and brought about the death of Daffodil.

Fourthly, that he led his band into the bogs of Marshollos, where the Serpentes electrified as many as they could catch.

Fifthly, that he passed through the Valley of Spectral Temptations, and there left behind many of his people to escape when they were able.

Sixthly, that he marched all night through the Cavern of Subterranean Cataracts, where Snap-Dragon, missing his way in the darkness, was entrapped by the Ondines, and borne away to the Water World.

Sevently, that he had exposed his people to all the perils of field and flood in the Valley of a Thousand Rills.

Eighthly, that he had suffered them to be wrecked on the Turtle Rocks.

Ninthly, that he had risked their lives, neglected their comforts, and misdemeaned himself in every way during the journey through the Enchanted Forest of Stone.

Tenthly, and lastly, that on his return home he had attempted to alienate the affections of his followers from their rightful sovereign, to the intent that he might subvert her Majesty's established government, abolish royalty, and found in Shencland a republic on the most democratic principles, with himself at its head.

When these charges had been duly and distinctly recited, Sir Tuflongbo was called upon in the proper form to plead; and he pleaded "Not Guilty." Little Content instantly sped away to communicate that to the Queen, and returned into Court just as the first witness was brought forward for the prosecution. This witness was the false spy Bugloss.

Being requested to state what he knew of the prisoner, Bugloss, remembering and *feeling* still the kick of the previous day, gave seven-leagued wings to his imagination, and flew away so far from the regions of fact that even Longwits felt he was overdoing his part, and tried to make him rein in his fancy, by asking his questions in the most precise shape possible. But it was a vain desire; Bugloss had a revenge to gratify as well as a florid tongue to indulge, and he painted the conduct of Sir Tuflongbo in the blackest shades. Double and Twist put to him several leading questions that helped him along when he halted; but when it came to Tackle and Shrewd to cross-examine, they got out of him an amazing amount of contradiction; and the jury were warned by Judge Greybeard not to attach any weight

to his evidence, for it was too palpably but the invention of the moment.

The second witness called for the prosecution was Betony, who came forward with the utmost reluctance and astonishment. Longwits could make nothing of him, for he would answer "Yes," and "No," and "He didn't know," to whatever was asked him without any discrimination. And when the Attorney-General worked himself up into a fume, and tried to frighten him, he only opened his mouth and stared, and wondered how a person of his fame could be exposed to such a worrying from a mere bagwig. Double and Twist led him a curious dance; but the sum and substance of all his evidence was comprised in a declaration that "Sir Tuflongbo was a good fellow, and he wished him no evil," and so he was bidden to stand down; and being too bewildered to do it, a halberdier helped him; and the third witness was called, and appeared in the person of the malevolent Lobelia.

This witness was extremely clear and cautious in all her statements. She understood what was evidence and what was not evidence, and kept close to the point she wished to prove. All she said was consistent in itself; but then it was invention, pure and simple, and she had arranged and combined every part of her story so that no flaw should be found in it. She gave the lawyers considerable trouble; and Judge Greybeard bade the jury understand that the two things least capable of disproof in a court of justice were—a pure truth and an unmitigated lie; whether the witness Lobelia was telling the one or the other it was their duty to consider. She coloured and looked confused for a moment, but speedily regained her self-possession, and left the witness-box with the serenity of satisfied virtue.

The appearance of the next witness, Aunt Spite, caused a thrill of horror in the Court. She looked as yellow as an orange and as sour as verjuice, because from the severity of her sufferings in the bogs of Marshollos she had never thoroughly recovered. In deference to her great age and weakness, she was permitted to sit, and her examination was begun by Longwits very carefully. She was ready to swear to anything in her animosity against Sir Tuflongbo; but having unfortunately made that statement to begin with, the weight of her evidence was exceedingly small. During her cross-examination she was required to give a categorical account of her sensations while the Serpentes were electrifying her, and this she did in so touching and pathetic a strain that the whole Court was convulsed with laughter. This enraged her exceedingly, and she shook a finger threateningly at the junior bar where Wild Sorrel sat drawing a caricature of her on his blotting-paper. She was called to order, upon which she lost her temper, and *hissed* at the judges, who immediately committed her for contempt of Court, and the ushers removed her.

The case for the prosecution was closed by the reading and examination of the papers found in Sir Tuflongbo's apartment. These consisted chiefly of etchings of a humorous but not treasonable character. There was a sketch of Prim in a pie-cap, which was passed about the bar and the Bench and the most distinguished of the audience, and elicited a smile even from Judge Grim; Wild Sorrel touched it up when it came to him, and Prim would have been surprised if she could have seen the guy he had made of her. There was also a design of a courting scene, in which figured Tippet and

Mother Dignity ; over this Greybeard shook his head, but laughed ; and there was a romantic sketch of the death of Rufnagumba, in which Betony, his destroyer, cut a most laughable figure.

Stern-visaged Truth then rose and called the witnesses for the defence ; and Sir Arum, Prince Polyanthus, Yarrow, and every one of his people bore a most beautiful and eloquent testimony to the worth and honour of their Leader. Oldairs also, President of the Royal Society of Wiseacres, spoke most highly in his favour, and everybody about the Court gave him a good word.

Judge Greybeard then, in the midst of a profound silence, began to sum up.

“Touching the first charge in the indictment, that Sir Tuflongbo had abandoned and neglected a part of his forces in a desolate region ; it was to be said that all leaders of adventurers have a recognised right to disembarrass themselves of fearful persons and mollycoddles. The dissensions between Prince Polyanthus and Snap-Dragon were not chargeable upon the accused, he being absent at the period of their occurrence. The expedition of Sir Arum and the chivalrous Daffodil, he, the judge, considered to be wrongly and disrespectfully characterised as a wild-goose chase. The daughters of King Cloves were not wild geese, but sensitive and glad-hearted Princesses. That Daffodil had fallen on this occasion was true, but he was a soldier, and for a soldier to die in battle was the fortune of war ; and how or where could he have died more gloriously ? The affair at Marshollos he would pass over as altogether frivolous ; the Serpentes might be right and they might be wrong in playing football with Aunt Spite and

Lobelia, but Sir Tuflongbo's crime *there* was undoubtedly that he had gone to their rescue."

Here there was applause in the Court and laughter, and when peace was restored, Judge Greybeard continued his summing up. "As for the quick march through the Valley of Spectral Temptations, it was a wise measure ; there were circumstances in which retreat was prudent. The tragical fate of Snap-Dragon must lie ever at his own door; his presumptuous mockery at the eyes in the dreadful Cavern of Subterranean Cataracts had drawn it upon him, and not all the law in Sheneland could prove it otherwise. With regard to the perils by field and flood in the Valley of a Thousand Rills, Sir Tuflongbo shared them with his people, and their wreck on the Turtle Rocks was a deliverance rather than a misfortune. As for the final charge of treason against her Majesty and the established government, it was enough to say, that Queen Osmunda herself had expressed to her Privy Council an utter disbelief in it, and a firm reliance on Sir Tuflongbo as the steadiest prop of her throne."

Again the applause broke forth in the Court, and the jury gave a unanimous verdict of acquittal on all the charges, and they wanted to have the false witnesses brought up that they might immediately punish them ; but Tackle snubbed them into propriety, and said the proceeding would be irregular, for law has its own mazy course, which must not be departed from, even for the satisfaction of justice and equity.

So Judge Greybeard pronounced Sir Tuflongbo *free*, and while little Content sprang into his arms, and kissed him, and cried for joy, the Young Observer sped away, and told the good news to the Queen and all her anxious Court.

Then the Princes, and King Cloves, and Sir Arum and his companions, shook hands with the liberated Knight-Fairy, and congratulated him on his deliverance; and though he would have preferred a few hours of rest and quiet, after the dreadful excitement of his trial, he was pressed to sit down at the judges' banquet, and it was impossible for him, under the circumstances, to refuse. But first he went to her Majesty's private apartments, and received her kind felicitations, and was glorified more than ever by the Court beauties; and so it all ended, and the threatening tragedy passed over, and Sir Tuflongbo, Knight-Fairy of the Most Noble Order of Valour, was more popular and happier than before.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

LITTLE CONTENT'S RETURN TO HIS LOST HOME.

THAT evening, as soon as they were alone, little Content came boldly and stood at Sir Tuflongbo's knee, and when his kind protector patted his head, and asked him what was the matter, he said,—

“Have you forgotten, Tuflongbo? The four days are ended, and my father and mother must be on the watch for me. Oh, when shall we set out?”

“Let us take a walk into the Forest now,” replied the Traveller, putting aside his own desire to rest, and immediately donning his cap.

And, hand in hand, Sir Tuflongbo and little Content strolled out through the Palace gates, and down a beautiful glade, where the trees waved green as emerald, and

the sweet sunset shimmered through the leaves like lustre of gold. As the child passed on his rejoicing way, the tiny things in the grass peered out, and chirped him a welcome; and all the feathered creatures that nested in the forest, sat on the boughs, and sang him a greeting. The neat-capt daisies nodded to him one and all, and the wild white roses blew him kisses on every breeze.

And as they passed by the hollow of the Ash-tree, where Old Woman lived with her little Maid Brisk, they both looked out at the doorway and said,—

“On your way home again, little Content? Make haste, they are waiting for you. Quamoelit has been here, and she says your mother has been expecting you all the day; and your father has made you a little new chair to rest in after your wanderings.”

“Quick, dear Tuflongbo, quick!” cried the child, pulling impatiently at his hand; so the great Traveller mended his pace, and little Content ran alongside him, panting and breathless with eagerness and joy.

And presently there was a familiar rippling sound heard beyond the trees, to which the child listened for a moment, and then cried,—

“I know it, that is the voice of my rivulet! I know its merry song, quick, dear Tuflongbo, quick!”

And just at that moment his mother came through the trees, and caught him in her arms, and lifted him from the ground to her bosom, and wept, and sobbed aloud for very delight. “Oh, my son, my little son, my dear little son!” was all she could say, and another tender hand caressed his curly head, and patted his rosy cheeks; and another trembling loving voice said, “My son, my little son!” and the child was too happy to know or

feel anything, but that he was in his mother's heart again, and with his father at hand.

Sir Tuflongbo stood unobserved for some time; but when Father Sorrel turned to lead his wife and child back to the cottage, little Content held out a hand to him, and said *he* must come too; for he had been his very kind and good protector through all his days of adversity; and Father Sorrel thanked him, and made him heartily welcome for his son's sake.

And when they came in sight of the cottage, everything about it looked just as it used to look in little Content's first happy days. The wild clematis was twining over the thatched roof, the bushes were all in flower, the fagots of wood for winter fires were neatly stacked up in their usual place, and every sign of Fairy Nettle had disappeared from the stones at the door.

Within the cottage, too, all was in order. The spinning-wheel stood by the window, and his mother's seat where she had been spinning in the morning; the porridge was standing ready for supper with plenty of salt in it, and no pepper, exactly as Father Sorrel preferred it; and they all sat down and were thankful, and enjoyed it, though it was very homely fare. His mother held little Content on her lap all the time, as if she feared lest she might lose him again; and when he looked with admiration at the beautiful new chair that his father had made for him, as if he would like to try it, she held him close, and whispered that he should rest in it in the morning, while she went about her work, and his father was out wood-cutting in the forest. So he leant his head against her bosom, and was satisfied.

When supper was ended, Sir Tuflongbo, who had been very silent, not to intrude on the joyful happiness

of the re-united family, rose, and said it was time he was on his way back to Elfin Court. So Father Sorrel accompanied him as far as Old Woman's house in the hollow trunk of the Ash-tree, his wife following with their little son in her arms; and at that point, Content bade his kind, good protector farewell, and his father and mother gratefully thanked the renowned Traveller, who went on his way rather sad to part company with his cheerful little companion in the long journey through the Enchanted Forest of Stone.

As Father Sorrel, his wife, and son were returning to the cottage, all pleased and happy together, they were joined by little Maid Brisk, who appeared in a high state of glee and excitement. Of course, they inquired what was to do.

"Oh, such a charming event!" cried she in her clear quick voice. "Sir Arum the Ardent and glad-hearted Princess Myrrh are going to be married the day after to-morrow; and Old Woman has received an immense order for wedding clothes! I am on my way now to the Enchanted Bower, to gather wild white roses with the dew upon them, and the moon-rays in their hearts, to make the bride's robes. Oh, it will be such a sweet sight, and I shall see it!"

And smart little Brisk tript singing on her way, as merrily as a little lark. And presently Father Sorrel, his wife, and son were overtaken by Swiftfoot, one of the messengers from the Palace, who brought commands from the Court by order of the Queen.

"Father Sorrel," said he, "there is going to be a fine wedding at Court, and I am sent to tell you to set up triumphal arches of flowers from the Palace gates all the way down the glade as far as the Enchanted Bower.





Little Content recognises some old Acquaintances.

They must be ready by sunrise the day after to-morrow. It is rather short notice ; but I see you have your little son with you again, and he will help you."

"The arches shall bloom, Swiftfoot, by the hour of dawn," replied Father Sorrel, and then Swiftfoot departed and left them.

That night little Content slept in his mother's heart like a bird in its nest, and the following morning when breakfast was over, he left her to her spinning, and went out with his father into the forest to help him in gathering flowers, and setting up the triumphal arches. He had on a neat little suit of working clothes, which his mother had made for him, and it amused him exceedingly when he was perched up amongst the buds and boughs and blossoms that his father was twining over the Palace door, to see numbers of his former companions and acquaintance pass in and out without recognising him.

He saw Sir Arum and his joyful betrothed, but their faces were bent down close together in whispered talk, and they had neither word nor glance for any but each other ; and he saw Betony, who stared at him open-mouthed with an astonished air of recognition, but passed on without speaking ; and he saw Sir Tuflongbo looking to his shoes, his knapsack, and his walking-stick, as if he had already another journey of adventures in contemplation ; and he saw Queen Osmunda go abroad on her white butterfly with all the Court ; but the only persons who saw *him* were the Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun, and Worry, Captain of the Royal Household, with Dopppe and three handsome fat black puppies, all her own, and round, sleek and shining as buttered black balls.

The dogs wagged their tails, and remarked in an expressive way that they were delighted to see him; and the Young Observer and Roly-Poly came and held a talk with him under the arch about the great festivities that were to close with the wedding on the morrow.

"I don't care about weddings, and love, and stuff; do you?" said the Young Observer, with a weary scorn; "what *I* like is the fighting, and tournaments, and all that—Grimgolphin, you know, and such fellows. I say, what lots of wonderful things you must have seen when you were travelling with Sir Tuflongbo! I wish he'd take *me* with him on his next journey."

"Ask him, perhaps he will," replied little Content. "He is very kind. Have you any such famous travellers in your Country under the Sun?"

"I should just think we have. There's Munchausen, and Gulliver, and Sinbad the Sailor, and Robinson Crusoe, and I can't tell you who besides."

"Then why don't you set out as an adventurer with one of them?"

"Oh! I've gone on their journeys ever so often, I know all their discoveries by heart."

"It will be very pretty to-morrow, I shall have on my white frock and blue sash," exclaimed Roly-Poly, striking abruptly into the conversation.

"Oh, fudge, never mind sashes!" said her brother; "I say, Content"—but looking up again to renew the talk about travellers, he saw that the little workman had been called away by Father Sorrel, and that he was busy wreathing the stone lions that watched at the Palace gates with garlands of oak and ivy; so he put his hands in his pockets, and strolled away, with his sister Roly-Poly trotting after him.

And before twilight fell, every arch was gay as a rainbow of flowers, all the way down from the palace gates to the Enchanted Bower ; and Father Sorrel and his little son went home, tired but happy, and were welcomed with great joy by the now kind wife and mother.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE MARRIAGE OF SIR ARUM AND PRINCESS MYRRH.

LITTLE Content was awakened the next morning by the merry, merry music of the Fairy Bells, chiming in all the moist and shady places, and rippling over every mossy bank in one unbroken peal of melody. Up he sprang, and donned his holiday clothes, and sped away to the palace with his father and mother to see the beautiful wedding at Court.

When they arrived, the grand hall was already crowded ; Queen Osmunda was seated on her golden throne, with King Cloves, Prince Goldheart, Prince Glee, Princess Trill, Mother Dignity, and a few of the Maids of Honour, grouped behind her on the dais of beauty.

On the highest step in the centre knelt Sir Arum and the glad-hearted Princess Myrrh, in her moonlit robes of white, and with the veil of silver gossamer over her fair head. The pearl of meekness was on her brow, the emerald of duty in her hand, the ruby of love on her lips, and the diamond of purity over her heart, all marriage gifts from the Queen.

To the right of this sweet pair knelt Prince Polyan-

thus, perfumed and gay, with the subdued Amaryllis by his side. And to the left knelt Betony, utterly confounded by surprise, with the gentle hero-worshipper, poetical Eglantine, holding his hand.

On the lower step, Muffin, master of the ceremonies, had elegantly arranged all the other couples who were to be united that day in the presence of the Queen and Court. Many of Sir Tuflongbo's adventurers were amongst them, and as the brave proverbially deserve the fair, they had found favour in the eyes of the most distinguished of the Elfin beauties. Yarrow and Acacia were hand in hand ; Hawkweed and Althea, Hawthorn and Anemone, Dock and Celandine, Elder and Clematis, Box and Cyclamen, Lychnis and Mignonette, Orphry and Snowdrop, Walnut and Primrose, Mezereon and Heliotrope, Whin and Jasmin, Phlox and Pansy, Valerian and Mallow, Xanthium and Orchis. It was anticipated that the frivolous Columbine, and Jonquil who had courted her assiduously for a long time, would also have been married on this occasion ; but, at the last moment, she announced that she could not make up her mind ; so Jonquil broke off the engagement in a pet, and went courting to the Elf Diosma.

All the last year's brides and bridegrooms appeared in their wedding attire, and Roly-Poly felt in her simple little heart that she had never seen so beautiful a sight as the grand hall presented, when Queen Osmunda rose from her golden throne, and extending her sceptre over the heads of Sir Arum and Princess Myrrh, said in her voice of silver,—

“These are Sir Arum the Ardent, Knight Fairy of the Noble Order of Valour, and Princess Myrrh, the glad-hearted daughter of Cloves, dignified King of the

Balmy Isles. They now profess their mutual love and affection in the presence of Elfin Court, and who shall *dare* to say them *nay* ?”

And not a tongue spoke.

Then her Majesty performed the same ceremony over her deliverer, the proud and wealthy Prince Polyanthus, and his chosen Amaryllis ; and over the hero-worshipping, poetical Eglantine, and *her* chosen, the astonished Betony ; and over every other couple, separately and singly ; and by the time all were married, it was nearly noon, and everybody was glad when it was over.

A sumptuous breakfast had been spread in the royal dining hall, and thither Queen Osmunda led the way after the weddings, the newly-married pairs following to her table, where Sir Arum and his bride, and Prince Polyanthus and his bride, were placed in the seats of honour on either side of her gracious Majesty. At the other end of the board were King Cloves, Mother Dignity, and Prince Goldheart. At the second table, Prince Glee and Princess Trill presided over all who were married on the same occasion as themselves ; while Tricksy and his wife Sweetlips took the head of those who had graduated in family honours. The miscellaneous company disposed of themselves as they could, and enjoyed the feast exceedingly, and gave toasts and drank healths as gaily as possible. And all the time the Fairy Bells kept up the joyous fantasia.

After the feast, came the procession under the flowery rainbow arches, down through the forest to the Enchanted Bower.

First went Grand Pomp and the twelve banner bearers, bearing their banners of poppy silk ; then Trig and Tart, the minor heralds, and the three-score and five trum-



peters with their trumpets of golden reeds, playing the Elfin Court wedding march. Next came Muffin, master of the ceremonies, proceeding backwards with striking ease and elegance for so stout a Fairy, her most gracious Majesty the Queen, with King Cloves and Prince Gold-heart on either hand. Then followed the brides and bridegrooms in happy, lovely pairs, Sir Arum the Ardent and the glad-hearted Princess Myrrh going first; and the others in due order, according to their honour and degree. After them went the last year's couples, led by Prince Glee and Princess Trill, and next those crowned with family cares, headed by Tricksy and Sweetlips. The Knights Fairy closed in behind them, and Mother Dignity marched next with the Royal Pages and Maids of Honour, in great glee after her. All the other company then at Court swelled the procession, Sir Tufongbo being amongst them, with little Content and the Boy and Girl from the Country under the Sun.

Sardony and Tippet declined to go to Court that day, and sat together on a mushroom in a shady nook of the woods, to make their observations as the gay bridal procession went by. Little Maid Brisk, who was also on the watch, but in a very different frame of mind, heard Sardony say in a bitter tone, "That it was a pitiful sight to see so many fools rejoicing in their folly, and dancing over what would most likely prove the greatest disaster in their lives," and Tippet rejoined ironically that "he wished they might never repent it." Little Brisk reported these mysterious sayings to Old Woman, who bade her pay them no heed; for they were sheer stuff and nonsense, fruit of ashes and disappointment. So Brisk forgot she had ever heard anything so silly.

When the wedding procession reached the Enchanted Bower, gifts were flung abroad by invisible hands to the brides and their lovers ; and some received good gifts, and others only such as were of doubtful value. Afterwards there was a solemn audience with the veiled figure of the Future for them, and they all saw her robes shining, and light about her steps wherever she trode. And when she retired beyond the inner gate of the bower, the procession re-formed, and went back to the palace as they had come ; with the Elfin Court wedding march playing as before, and all the blue bells and lily-bells ringing more merrily than ever.

The day ended with a magnificent ball and supper, where everybody danced and ate like Kings and Queens. It was a glorious spectacle, but it could not last for ever ; and the next morning it was at an end, and Elfin Court returned to its ordinary amusements and festivities, such as all weddings are celebrated with in Sheneland ; that is, plays, pantomimes, magic lanterns, conjurors, tumblers, stories, games, entertainments, and all manner of delightful recreations. The Boy from the Country under the Sun did not remain for them. He witnessed the great marriage scene, and followed the procession in company with his sister, little Content, and Sir Tuf-longbo ; but when night came, and the ball began, he disappeared. Father Sorrel carried his son home, and Professor Holiday's wife put Roly-Poly cosily to bed, but to everybody's anxiety and distress, the Young Observer continued missing, and was nowhere to be found.

The festivities at Elfin Court in due time concluded King Cloves sailed away to the Balmy Isles, with Sir Arum and Princess Myrrh ; Prince Polyanthus retired

with Amaryllis to his country seat ; the astonished Betony, and now still more astonished poetical Eglantine, began to find each other out, and everything at Court rolled along again in its ordinary groove.

Six weeks elapsed, and still the Boy from the Country under the Sun was absent. Queen Osmunda was just on the point of proclaiming a reward for his discovery, when the kind Old Woman who lived in the hollow trunk of the ash-tree, set everybody's anxious mind at rest, by announcing that she had seen him, late on the wedding evening, speeding down a secluded glade, in company with Sir Tuflongbo, as fast as a truant who knows Professor Twig is behind him. Not wishing to spoil his chances of a great journey in the renowned Traveller's society, she had kept her own counsel, until she hoped he was out of reach. The only other details she could give were, that he had a knapsack on his back, a staff in his hand, and square-toed shoes with nails in the double soles on his feet ; also that Sir Tuflongbo was talking to him, and that he was laughing very much.

CHAPTER LXXX.

TUFLONGBO ABOLISHES A BAD CUSTOM.

IT was quite true Young Observer and Sir Tufingbo had struck up a grand alliance of friendship, and while everybody else was at the Royal Feast, eating like Kings and Queens, they had set quietly off without leaving any clue as to whither they were gone ; and the next morning, when their flight was discovered, they were

far away beyond the Enchanted Bower, with a journey before them to the remote parts of Sheneland ; and the Young Observer, then feeling himself safe from pursuit and capture, got into high feather and the very best of good spirits. The first station where the travellers rested was a curious place, where the Young Observer was shocked to see an assemblage of infants teaching their grandmothers to suck eggs. The old ladies were sitting upon a narrow bench, with their worthy toes turned in, their chins sunk on their bosoms, and their minds generally in a state of profound dejection. The famous Adventurer put on his spectacles, and regarded them with tender pity and sympathy ; many strange things had he seen in his journeying, but never had he seen anything that touched him with so indignant a compassion as the position and aspect of these persecuted and venerable dames ; and the Young Observer felt precisely the same.

Up and down before them marched their dreadfully-clever grandchildren, some in knickerbockers of poppy-cloth, some in fan-tailed pigeon-gossamer, but all bearing on their arms baskets of poultry produce labelled with all sorts of hard words.

“ Now, granny dear, this Egg is Physical Geography !” cried one small pedagogue in petticoats. “ Apply it to your lips, take a good suck—thus—and then be pleased to mention in the order of their importance the great watersheds of Sheneland.”

Granny wept behind her glasses, and was dumb. Sir Tuflongbo could have wept, too, and he registered a silent vow to do his best to discourage henceforward this abominable practice of the younger folks teaching their elders ; but being there with the Young Observer

for the express purpose of gathering useful knowledge, he gave his attention diligently to the methods of instruction pursued in this singular school of learning and morals.

One irreverent monkey bade his mamsie look alive, and give him the altitude of the nearest fixed star; another demanded the animal products of the moon; a third preached up the new principle of moral suasion; a fourth talked physiology, criticism, poetry, trigonometry, and heresy, like an addled philosopher; while a fifth set his grannie sums that were of no more use than money gone mad!

Sir Tuflongbo found his patience sorely tried, but he had yet worse tortures of temper to suffer. Presently a small shrill-voiced Prig got out an Egg of Facts to correct Fancies, and was for making his granny swallow it whole, while he proved to her that there were no such creatures as Ogres. Didn't Sir Tuflongbo give him a tweak of the ear for *that!* Then a still more intolerable little imp pulled a long face like a fiddle, professed a preference for work over play, and for *sweet* verses over funny tales—but that was the Fairykin who stole the jam.

The famous Adventurer was set fairly beside himself on hearing these precocious *goedy* pretences. He sprang up from his seat suddenly, with a jerk, as if till that moment he had been wired down to it, and, making a rush on the baskets, with half a dozen dexterous applications of his toe he did kick all those ridiculous Eggs out of them, and the Young Observer gladly lent his assistance to disperse them into dusty nooks and corners, where nobody could ever find them again. Then the grannies gave vent to a cheer of relief, and after a mo-

mentary dismay the fairykins threw off their sham airs of wisdom, joined in it, and became quite naturally nice, noisy, and naughty—a most agreeable variety on their previous primness. They then espied Sir Tuflongbo, and gathered clustering round his knees, crying, “Tell us a story! Oh, tell us a story! Do, please, dear, darling old Tuflongbo!”

“What shall it be about?” asked the great Traveller, who was easily propitiated when tiny hands plucked at him, and tiny, soft, warm faces crowded up to his.

“Oh, something jolly! Don’t put a moral in it to teach us how *bad* we are and how *good* we might be,” whispered a sly rogue, curling a quaint nose in confidence at his friend. Sir Tuflongbo understood him perfectly, and when order was restored, he narrated to his eager little audience the wonderful story of The Enchanted Dumplings, while the Boy from the Country under the Sun sat by taking notes of it.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE STORY OF THE ENCHANTED DUMPLINGS.

ONCE upon a time there lived in Sheneland a very poor couple, on whom had been bestowed the blessing of two sons—twins—whose names were Lappit and Lob. Now, though their father and mother loved them very dearly, it was often a difficult matter to find their hungry, growing children enough to eat; so on a certain day they called them into their presence, and after many tears and embraces, gave them a benediction, and bade them go

into the forest, and seek food for themselves. Lappit and Lob were not sorry to become thus early their own masters, and they turned away from their humble birth-place without regret: life with its grand chances was all before them—behind them was only love, and meek poverty with contentment. But before they set out their father gave them one piece of excellent advice.

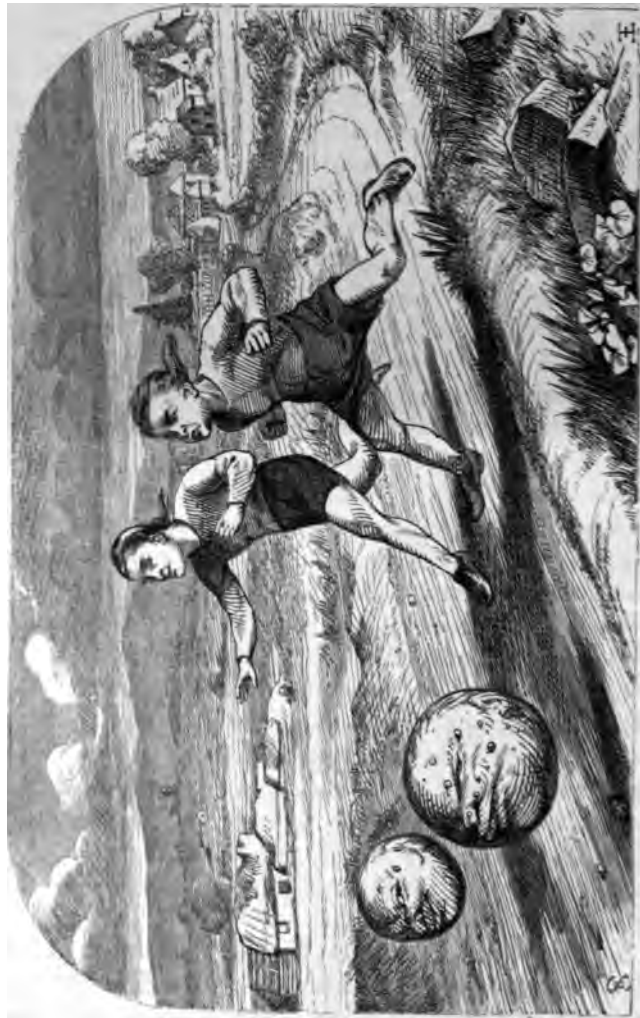
“My beloved sons,” said he, gravely; “let me warn you to neglect no passing joy in the ardour of your pursuit after any single object. Our journey is never very long, and the end of our work comes soon enough; therefore stretch not forward too eagerly, lest you neglect for a distant phantom a present and substantial good. The pleasure, the suffering, and the provision for each day come with it—do not shut your eyes to be rid of any one of them. Take them as they arrive and be thankful.”

And Lappit and Lob started forth on their travels and labours, faithfully intending to follow their father's sage counsel. It was then morning, and very pleasant, fresh, spring weather. The road they took had a thousand charms for their unaccustomed eyes, but they began by and by to wish for some change in its monotony, or, at any rate, for some special object of attainment after their hard work of walking hour after hour.

At length said Lappit, “Dear Lob, do you ever remember hearing tell of the marvellous Enchanted Dumplings that are to be found in this forest? I think if I could only find one I should be completely happy.”

“Yes, I have heard of them,” replied Lob. “Let us seek some—the very thought was in my mind when you spoke!”





Legipt and Lob pursuing the Enchanted Dumplings.



“What a remarkable coincidence! Then, rely on it, we are going to have good luck,” cried Lappit.

“Fortune grant it!” answered Lob, and away they went, quickening their pace, cheerfully and hopefully together.

They had not gone far when they heard a sound of chop, chop, chop, and that was the suet; then of stir, stir, stir, and that was mixing the dough; then of hiss, bubble, bubble, and that was dumplings boiling in the pot! The next thing that happened was very singular indeed. A brace of tidy little dumplings were flung out on the road before them, which immediately began to roll and bowl, and trundle themselves away in desperate haste while Lappit and Lob gave hot and eager chase.

Lappit, in his desire to capture one of them, literally flung himself full length on the ground with arms extended to the utmost stretch, and was within an ace of reaching it when it gave a great leap and swift! was miles ahead before he could recover his feet. Then Lob, perceiving that his brother failed in thus making a dash at the sweet object of his desires, determined to try craft with his dumpling, and executed many clever manœuvres in and out amongst the trees, and laid many wily ambushes to entrap it, but none of them succeeded; and the pursuers were already breathless, while the Enchanted Dumplings still rolled on as merrily and mockingly as ever!

Lappit, as it then appeared, was of a temper easily discouraged, for he now began to protest that he saw no chance of overtaking them, and Lob was just on the point of agreeing with him, when a husky voice said from amidst the brambles, “You must have more

patience. Frantic bursts of strength never avail in a race with Enchanted Dumplings. You must run steadily to endeavour to tire them down."

Lappit and Lob looked about for the speaker, but they saw no one, and as the Dumplings were just vanishing on the edge of the horizon, they determined to make a new effort to catch them ere it was too late; and so they fell into a long swinging trot, which did not exhaust their own strength, but covered a great extent of ground, and at length they became sure that they were gaining on their prey. They kept up their peculiar pace without ever flagging, for each moment now visibly lessened the distance between pursuers and pursued, and the Enchanted Dumplings betrayed evident signs of distress.

"Five minutes more of steady running and they are ours!" panted Lob; and at the end of that time they *were* theirs, and the brace of tidy little Dumplings gave up the ghost with a jolly laugh, owning themselves fairly caught.

Then the twin brothers gaily sat down under the shade of a spreading tree, and each plied a gallant knife and fork upon his spoil. They ate with excellent appetite, praised the cook, extolled the puddings; and, though very diligent in satisfying their own needs, both readily spared some good solid slices to certain hungry poor folks who came to look on.

When they had eaten sufficient they rose and proceeded on their way, cheerful and refreshed, still singing the praises of the tidy little Dumplings which they had so much enjoyed. But the sight of a middle-aged person in the very crisis of capturing one twice as big, -hanged their merry mood to one of extreme dissatis-

faction, and they began to make critical and sarcastic remarks upon what had so recently been the object of their ardent desire and pursuit.

"After all, Lob, our Dumplings were not worth the trouble we were at to overtake them," said Lappit contemptuously. "They were but very plain puddings, and must have been made in a monstrous high wind; for, if you observed, the plums were not on speaking terms with each other."

"I was just making the same reflection," answered Lob; "I am sure I cannot resign myself to never tasting anything better than that poor pasty stuff—pasty stuff without sauce too—Ugh!"

"I wish we could have the chance of such a prize as we saw that stranger picking up just now," sighed Lappit.

"So do I, and then we should be happy, indeed!" responded Lob.

And with that they toiled on their way, envious and despondent, until they heard the chop, chop, chop, stir, stir, stir, hiss, bubble, bubble of Dumplings boiling in the pot!

"I do believe we are going to have another chance!" then cried Lappit; and immediately two big, bouncing Enchanted Dumplings sprang full in front of their feet, rested a moment to enjoy their astonishment, and then took to flight precisely as their tidy little predecessors had done!

Then away went Lappit and Lob in chase, over hill and dale, through bush, through briar, panting, puffing, tripping, stumbling, seeing none of the pleasant beautiful scenes by the way, and with eyes, hearts, and minds, intent on nothing but the big bouncing Enchanted

Dumplings, which kept well in front, and seemed twenty times and more as if they were on the point of winning the race. But the brothers, though heated and thirsty, still followed energetically, and at last their spoil was secured, but not without immense pain and difficulty.

"Oh, what a dreadful pain I have in my side!" sobbed Lappit.

"And oh, how shockingly stiff are my poor legs!" sighed Lob; but they both nevertheless sat down and ate their pudding.

Then again came starved Waifs and Strays and eyed them hungrily; but though they had ten times more than they could possibly enjoy, they did not feel half so much inclined to be liberal as when they had only just enough for themselves. They talked of shams and impostors, and felt themselves very wise, good, responsible people—but not liberal, and it was with rather an effort that they at last condescended to say, as the poor starved folks were going empty away, "If you can wait till we have finished, then you may pick up our crumbs." So the hungry folks picked them up, and being half-filled were proportionably grateful. Those who had shared the tidy little Dumplings blessed them—these were dumb.

The brothers made a heavy meal and sat long over it, but tiring at length even of that luxurious indulgence, they got up and marched on; not with half the spirit they had before, which they attributed to advancing age.

"We are neither of us so young as we have been," said Lappit; "and chasing Enchanted Dumplings is certainly hard work."

"So it is," agreed Lob; "but look—see that old fel-

low with a Dumpling as big as a house! If he is not going to scoop a hole in the middle of it and get in!"

"He's comfortable for life—I wish we were!" gasped Lappit, swelling with covetousness till his eyes nearly started out of his head.

"How unjustly things are dealt to be sure!" muttered Lob; "*we* must toil on, while that decrepit creature has only to enjoy himself." And thus the brothers growled and grumbled, until the displeasing spectacle of another's wealth was lost to view.

So they went on, never much exerting themselves, nor at all amusing themselves; their every thought being bent on the possibility of Enchanted Dumplings as big as houses being granted to them in reward for their well-spent lives, for they were both of opinion that they deserved them.

"Consider how hard we have struggled and striven with our lot," said Lappit. "What a vigorous race we ran for our first Dumplings, and how completely we forgot everything else in our pursuit of the second? If *we* are not meritorious, *who* is?"

"Perhaps if we give our whole minds to the search, we may yet conquer a third brace vast as that old fellow's, who was scooping a hole out of his to live in," suggested Lob. "Do not let us give up ambition yet."

"By no means. Not while there is a plum to be had," replied Lappit. And so they stretched forward on their journey, eagerly looking out for their great chance of a provision for life.

They were now travelling swiftly down hill, and near the bottom of the descent they espied two gigantic Enchanted Dumplings, apparently at a stand-still in one place. They immediately broke into a hobbling run

and, coming up with them, each clapped a hand on the one he chose, and shouted in a voice of husky triumph, "Mine!" Then both burst into feeble tears of pleasure, being no longer strong enough to control their feelings. As soon as they had a little recovered from the weakness they set to work to make a hole in the middle of their Dumplings, and when the task was accomplished, in they got, and wearily curled themselves up.

"Ugh!" grunted Lappit. "I don't know that it was worth while. I feel very much like falling asleep, now it is done."

"Plague on it!" snarled Lob. "When one has a rich house one must keep one's eyes open, for fear of thieves; and I am very drowsy."

These were private reflections, made by each to himself, and not meant to be overheard; but they were overheard, and presently the voice that had advised them in the pursuit of the first Dumplings, asked, quite close at hand,—

"Well, Lappit—well, Lob, now you are comfortable for life, I hope you are satisfied."

"Moderately so," responded the brothers, simultaneously.

Here there gathered round the rich castle-puddings an immense crowd of destitute, hungry folks with long gray wondering faces, and pallid blank eyes; their look, their attitude, their very gaze, were prayers, and they chilled the atmosphere with the cloud of their misery. The brothers stared at them with angry surprise, and then exclaimed, "Get out of our sunshine! we have nothing to give you. Go work, go race; tire down Enchanted Dumplings for yourselves!" But the poor Waifs and Strays stretched forth lean hands and begged

again, and again, and again, but to no purpose. Lappit and Lob buried themselves in the sweet softness of their enchanted dwellings, and would not spare them so much as a crumb. Then gradually they faded away, and when they were gone the air was colder than ever—cold as an icy east wind.

“We appear well off, but it is shivering winter here, brother, don’t you find it so?” presently whispered Lappit.

“Yes, and desperate lonely. How is it with your appetite now?” asked Lob.

“Lost!—quite lost! There is neither freshness nor savour in anything,” was Lappit’s dreary reply.

“Most true. I believe, after all, our first Dumplings were the best,” said Lob.

“Not a doubt of it. I’m sure they were,” agreed Lappit. “What is the use of these unwieldy things to us? They would feed a multitude.”

“Then why did you send away starving a multitude?” demanded the stern, unseen voice.

“Why, indeed? Are we, with the fruits of our toils, to fatten all the poor folks in Sheneland?” cried Lappit, indignantly.

“I should think not!” sneered Lob. “What we have raced and wrought for is our own, and shall never be lavished on the thriftless.”

“Success has hardened your hearts, brothers,” said the invisible voice. “You were richer when you had nothing, than you are now with luxury a thousand-fold greater than your needs.”

“How do you make that out?” inquired Lappit.

“Then you had kind thoughts of charity and mercy in your breasts, and they multiply bread and sweeten

it. *Now* you are full of self and greed, which turn all things to stone ; useless to you, and worse than useless ; heavy as stones round your necks to strangle you, and to others cruel stumbling-blocks, which should be helps."

"I wish you would go away with your disagreeable speeches," said Lob. "We have had little enough pleasure in our lives, I'm sure ; we saw very few charming sights as we raced—we had to run so hard to get what was worth having, or what seemed so. Do let us rest in peace, I beg."

"Rest if you can. Not many rest who have made so much haste to be rich as you ; especially if, when their end is gained, they cannot look outside the blinding halo of their wealth."

"Wealth, indeed ! don't mock us. Do you call this sickening Enchanted Dumpling wealth ?" shrieked Lappit, shrilly. "I cannot eat a scrap of it, and am myself well-nigh starving for lack of simpler food ; it is rich trash !"

"It is excellent pudding, but the way to enjoy it is to give large portions away. Let me call back those hungry poor folks," said the voice.

"No, no ; we have nothing else. We were at such pains to get it, pray let us keep it whole !" entreated the brothers. "Why, it has cost us all our lives to earn !"

"And it will end by choking you ! Too much pudding, like too much money, always destroys those who are over greedy to share it. If you refuse to be advised, I have done with you." And the voice faded off into a long echo of distress, which ceased not to ring in the brothers' ears until they both fell fast asleep.

And as soon as that happened, down came a flight of

birds of the air, and pecked the puddings to pieces, and strewed the crumbs all abroad on the earth; eating some, but wasting ten times more. And so the Enchanted Dumplings, that would have fed a multitude, never came to any good at all, and the names of Lappit and Lob were forgotten, except "to point a moral and adorn a tale!"

CHAPTER LXXXII.

SIR TUFLONGBO LAYS BY HIS KNAPSACK AND WALKING-STICK.

"WHO would have expected Sir Tuflongbo's Enchanted Dumplings to turn out sad!" murmured the Boy from the Country under the Sun; and then he shut up his tablets solemnly, and for three seconds and a half, he felt quite out of sorts. "If ever I am rich," thought he, "I'll try to make as many poor bodies happy as I can. It must be miserable work to have a pudding big enough for a score all to one's self; I could not enjoy it if it were drowned in sauce and all blue-blaze with brandy. The real fun of it is for lots of folks to be merry and thankful together. Lappit and Lob were miserly churls who did not know how to be rich—for it is a good thing to be rich if we have the heart to use money well and wisely."

Thus moralised the Young Observer, but the little Fairykins, for whose special delectation the legend had been told, took it very literally, and as soon as it was finished, set gaily off to the nearest wood to seek Enchanted Dumplings on their own account. Sir Tuf-

longbo admonished them not let the grass grow under their feet, but to be diligent in the quest, and then he took up his knapsack and walking-stick to proceed on his travels once more ; feeling, if the truth must be told, rather stiffer in his limbs than he used to do, and less buoyant and sanguine in his spirits than was his wont. But he did his best to be cheerful, and not in vain ; for he had always cultivated that temper, and it was not likely to fail him when he began to have most need of it.

For many another day he and his young companions journeyed on, making at each turn some new discovery, some useful reflection, or some practical remark. Sir Tuflongbo's renown had gone before him to the remotest corners of Sheneland ; and wherever he presented himself, he was received with honourable welcome. Thus the Observer enjoyed many high privileges. Under the famous Adventurer's wing, he passed safely through the awful district of Marshollos, where he saw the Electrical Serpentes at play, Gymnotus the Ancient leading the revels. He explored the Cavern of Subterranean Cataracts, dived down a Wishing-well, crossed the Valley of a Thousand Rills, and visited an Ogre at home, where he received most hospitable entertainment for Sir Tuflongbo's sake. After this he went into Wildwaste, ascended the highest peak of the Skihi mountains, and formed the personal acquaintance of a Crumplecue. At this point of their travels, it became painfully evident that Sir Tuflongbo's great strength and energy were, at last, beginning to fail him, and the Young Observer gently guided his steps towards the haunts of civilisation.

It was towards the close of a glorious autumnal day

that they entered the glades of the Enchanted Forest, where still dwelt little Content with his father and mother, under their thatched roof garlanded with ever-green clematis. The famous Traveller leant wearily on his young friend, who exhorted him to sit down and rest.

“By and by,” said he, “by and by—a few paces more, a few paces more;” and his invincible courage carried him in sight of his former merry little comrade’s abode. Content was looking out at the serene loveliness of the sky, and enjoying the pleasant leisure that follows on well-done work, when he espied his dear old Captain approaching. Immediately he ran forward to meet him, brought him in-doors, gave him of the best the house contained, and made him most heartily welcome.

“You will stay with me, you will not go any farther, my beloved master,” cried he, and kissed the aged Adventurer’s hand.

“No: I shall not go any farther now,” replied Sir Tuflongbo, laying by his knapsack and trusty staff. “My shoes, as you see, are nearly worn out. The toes are through, and the last nail dropped from the heels as we crossed this peaceful threshold. I have done with my labours, and they have done with me. But, friend, put by the curtain and set wide the door—let me see the last of the sun, for I always loved it, and I want it to warm me now, for my old bones are chill. Soon I shall fall asleep—night comes.”

Content did the great Traveller’s bidding, and the Young Observer hastened away to warn Sir Tuflongbo’s many friends that he was returned home, so they might come to bid him farewell ere he went to rest; and at his first word, all who knew him, big and little,

great and small, high and low, rich and poor, rushed in crowds to where he lay, supported in the tender and and faithful arms of Content.

Queen Osmunda herself appeared, attended by Prince Goldheart, Prince Glee, Sir Arum, and many more of her Court, who loved the ancient Adventurer; and after a brief conversation with him on his latest exploits, she remarked that it was wonderful to see him so blithe and cheerful at his years. He thanked his Gracious Mistress, and thought his eyes must be failing him, for he fancied he could perceive a white line in her hair and a wrinkle on her lovely brow: he asked if this were so indeed.

"Yes, Sir Tuflongbo, it is so; wrinkles and white hairs come to queens as to subjects," replied she, with a smile; "but I heed them not, for I and all whom I love are growing old together."

"Ay, ay," said the great Traveller; "'tis no fancy—my chameleon suit has lost its brightness also. There have been many changes in Sheneland since it was new, and I think the old fashions suited me best."

Here some stupid person ventured to suggest that perhaps the famous Adventurer was losing his memory; but his quick ear caught the harsh insinuation, and he promptly denied it. "Nothing of the sort!" cried he: "my last public service was to abolish an odious custom amongst Fairykins, of teaching their grannies to suck eggs; and *your* face I recollect as that of a little Prig who wanted to make his swallow one whole!" On which the stupid person retired in confusion, amidst the jeers and frowns of everybody there assembled.

Roly-Poly then came running in, breathless, with a troop of playfellows, and having climbed up on her dear

old, indulgent friend's knees, he entreated him to tell them all just *one* more story before he went to sleep. So Sir Tuflongbo stroked her golden head, took down his wallet from the wall, where Content had hung it when he laid it by, and picked out a short tale; then passed the receptacle, with all its multifarious collections of legends, parables, puzzles, and riddles, to the Young Observer, charging him to convey it to Fancy, the Court Moralist and Story-teller, as soon as he was fallen asleep; and the Boy faithfully promised to do his behests.

Every one present then sat down in a circle, and silence having been proclaimed, the Great Traveller and Adventurer, with his toil-worn, brown old hand resting on Roly-Poly's golden head, began to speak, and told his last story to his little friends.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

SIR TUFLONGBO'S LAST STORY.

LONG, long ago, in the reign of the venerable Queen Dull, there was found in an acorn-cup a most beautiful little Fairykin, to whom her Majesty solemnly stood godmother, and because a little crested curl rose up on his forehead like a horn, she gave him the name of Prince Topknot.

Prince Topknot was educated at Court, and was made learned in all the graces and elegancies of manner then in fashion, and by reason of his pure descent from the Royal Oak Tree, a great deal more deference was paid to his whims and fancies than was at all good for him; in con-

sequence of which, he grew extremely conceited. When he walked it was always with his nose and his crested curl in the air, as if his eyes were too noble to look on the common earth ; and many an awkward, humiliating tumble he got before he could condescend to notice the ground he trod on.

Now one day it happened that Queen Dull wished for some poppy-seed to sow in her summer garden where she slept of an afternoon, and Prince Topknot being sent out to gather some, came back with *sand* instead.

"What is this thou hast brought me, Prince Topknot?" asked the Queen, much disturbed.

"*Poppy-seed*," answered the Prince.

"Never grew *poppy* from *sand* yet! Some jester hath befooled thee!"

"A ragged little witling met me in the meads, and when I told him what I wanted, he gave me that and said it was poppy-seed."

"Hadst thou no eyes in thy head to *see* that it was mere sand-grains off the shore? Prince Topknot, thou wilt never be wise until thou has learnt to use thy own *servants*, instead of letting the first knave that comes play thee ill tricks."

"*Servants!*—who are my servants?" muttered the Prince; "I have none!"

"Hast thou no *eyes* to behold with, no *tongue* to speak with, no *feet* to walk with, no *hands* to handle with, no *head* to think with, no *heart* to feel with?"

"Everybody has *those*," was the contemptuous rejoinder.

"And though thou wert a King instead of a foolish little Princekin, thou couldst have none better, and none so faithful!" And the Queen was angry at his ridiculous

pride, and commanded him to leave her presence ; and then came the ragged little witling, and brought true poppy-seed to sow in the summer-garden where she slept of an afternoon.

From that day forth Prince Topknot was quite out of favour at Court, and his rival, the ragged little witling, was made Prime Minister ; but then he was ragged no longer, being clad in the best silk that the looms of Sheneland could spin. This reverse of fortune was extremely displeasing to the Prince, as you may well imagine, and he supported it with anything but dignity ; for not only had the Queen withdrawn her countenance from him, but all those parasites and sycophants, who had been foremost in upholding his vanity so long as he was in her good graces, now very obtrusively gave him the cold shoulder, and said that but for the crested curl that rose up on his forehead like a horn, and his descent from the Royal Oak Tree, he would be *nothing*.

“ Take from any of *you* your chief gift of nature and fortune, and you would be *less* than nothing ! ” was the Prince’s retort, which betrayed a certain shrewdness that might have stood him in good stead, if he would only have used it on common occasions. But as yet he could not subdue his lofty mind to do that. He still found a few inferior persons ready to think for him, feel for him, work for him, walk for him, and see for him, *because* he was Prince Topknot, and for no other reason ; and while he could thus keep his own servants in the luxury of pure idleness, he was quite contented to use theirs ; but it was a very negligent duty they paid him in return for his unwise confidence.

If he asked what sort of weather it was, one would tell him, “ The sun shines, your Highness,” though the

very sky was falling in torrents of rain ; but the Prince took his walk, and of course came back drenched to the skin. If he remarked that he felt hungry, his cook sent him word that he had had his dinner ; and though he *knew* he was empty, he was bound to believe him. At length, Princekin as he was, he fell into such a miserable state of slavery to those who surrounded him that there was not, perhaps, any more abjectly wretched person in all Queen Dull's dominions than he.

He endured this state of things for some time with passive pride, fortifying himself with ideas of his crested curl and his pure descent from the Royal Oak Tree. But sitting one afternoon in solitary magnificence under his great grandsire's shadow, two ragged witlings—cousins to the Prime Minister—came peeping round by the trunk, and after making several sly remarks on his serene state of self-glorification, they broke into a peal of mocking laughter, and declared they would not change places with Prince Topknot for all the crested curls in Sheneland. The Prince eyed them angrily and bade them begone, but he had now so few claims to personal respect that those who were independent of him did not consider it worth while to pay any deference to his dignity, and the pert witlings, instead of departing, only came round in front and danced a defiant jig before him. The Prince shut his eyes and pretended not to see them, but there were plenty of people ready to din an account of their insulting antics into his ears, and to magnify them twenty-fold.

At last said poor Topknot, "I won't bear this any longer!" and in a desperate moment he shaved off his crested curl, disguised himself in plain clothes and ran away from Court, leaving friends and foes, parasites

and mocking wittings behind him, and carrying absolutely nothing away but his own long lazy personal servants.

His first day's journey carried him some leagues deep into Tanglewood, and when he was preparing to rest for the night, he was painfully reminded that he had neither food nor bed. But, these needs notwithstanding, he felt easier and more cheerful in his temper than he had ever done since the day when he brought sand for poppy-seed to Queen Dull, and thus fell out of her favour. As long as the twilight lasted, he gathered wild berries and ate them for supper; and being satisfied, he plucked up reeds by the armful and made himself a couch under a tree, where he slept a sound, sweet slumber.

The next morning he awoke betimes, perfectly refreshed, and proceeding on his way, was joined by an ancient woodcutter going out into the forest for his day's work. The labourer carried his axe on his shoulder, and being aged, he could walk but slowly; the Prince, therefore, feelingly accommodated his own young feet to his companion's heavy steps, and when they reached that part of the wood which was being cleared, he offered to take the axe and do his task for him.

"You may if you can," replied the woodcutter, and he gave the stranger his tool.

"*If I can!*" echoed the proud Prince, with laughing contempt. "Why, of course I can!" and seizing the axe he swung it round his head with great demonstration of force, and aimed a blow at the biggest and toughest ash-tree he could find.

The Forester looked on, smiling to himself, until the beads of sweat began to stand on the eager Prince's brow; for though he had not yet cleft one clean stroke

through the bark, he had struck it fifty times, and hundreds of little chips and scraps strewed the ground about it; but his wild work did not look much like felling the tree, either that day or any other day.

"You are wasting your strength for nought, friend," then said the old labourer. "Let me give you a lesson." And taking the axe from Prince Topknot's hands, he showed him how to use it with due effect.

"Now let me try again," cried the young Prince, when he perceived what he must do; and this time striking with a will and with wisdom too, he began to make vast progress in his self-set task. It was morning when he began it; by noon he was half-way through the trunk, and towards evening down crashed the green tree upon the sward.

"That is well done!" cried the Forester, "and enough for one day."

"I never knew before what pleasure there is in *real work*," said the Prince, delighted, and stretched his frame and limbs, feeling new vigour and energy in every nerve.

"Never knew before what pleasure there is in real work!" echoed the woodcutter. "Why, where have you wasted your youth until now? *He who has not worked, has not lived.*"

"I was born a Prince," was the answer, "and such have no need to work. They find the world ready made for them."

"Oh, fool! fool! fool!" exclaimed the ancient labourer; "'tis they who help make the world; and whether they do their part well or ill, surely the praise or the blame of it shall lie on them for ever. Who made Princes made the work for Princes, and weariful work

it must needs often be, but nevertheless it must be done—*it must be done*. Therefore if yours be still neglected, let me beseech you go back whence you came, and make amends for wrong. A Prince should be double-sighted, readier of wit, keener of speech, quicker of hearing, tenderer of heart, than all others, as his work of governing is harder and nobler than theirs. You need wiser personal servants to rule fairies than to cut down trees. Now, go home and do your task."

"But I have shaved off my crested curl, and determined to be a Prince no more. I like your work better than my own," said Topknot.

"If you have shaved off your crested curl, it will grow again; and as to whether you like *your* work or *my* work best, it matters not. *You* must accomplish *yours*, and leave *me* to accomplish *mine*. The lots we have drawn we can neither change nor throw away. Wisdom higher than ours guided us in the choice. Farewell, friend, our ways lie wide apart—yours up on those conspicuous heights, mine down into this humble dell.' And with that the woodcutter shouldered his axe and parted company with Prince Topknot.

The Prince had the natural sagacity to see the truth of his counsel, and the courage to take it to heart; for the same night he journeyed back to Court, and resumed his proper place therein. Many a mortification awaited him, and many an hour of toil and disappointment before his long-indulged personal servants could be brought to work in obedience to his will. But at length he had them in thorough control and discipline; and by the time his crested curl had grown again to its former height, he had won such a reputation for prompt, quick-sighted prudence, high courage, and honour, that



“And now, friends, since she is gone, I think it is time I put off my shoes—I shall sleep better without,” said Sir Tuflongbo, looking dimly round on the rest. And so he put them off, and was sound asleep in a moment. And the Young Observer took up the far-travelled, worn-out things and made relics of them.

The next morning Sir Tuflongbo was at his journey's end, safe in Shadowland, with his dear father and mother, and bright little Roly-Poly was playing again in the sun.

THE END.

1

1

1

1



1



1950s



